DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 440 790 RC 022 372

TITLE	Results Matter: A Decade of Difference in Kentucky's Public Schools, 1990-2000.
INSTITUTION	Kentucky State Dept. of Education, Frankfort.
SPONS AGENCY	Office of Elementary and Secondary Education (ED), Washington, DC. Goals 2000 Program.
PUB DATE	2000-00-00
NOTE	82p.; Photographs and graphs may not reproduce adequately.
AVAILABLE FROM	For full text: http://www.kde.state.ky.us/comm/commrel/10th_anniversary.
PUB TYPE	Reports - Evaluative (142)
EDRS PRICE	MF01/PC04 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	*Academic Achievement; Accountability; Community Involvement; Dropout Rate; Early Childhood Education; *Educational Change; Educational Equity (Finance); *Educational Improvement; Elementary Secondary Education; Improvement Programs; Parent Participation; Program Evaluation; *Public Schools; School Based Management; School Holding Power; *School Restructuring; State Legislation; *State Standards; Student Evaluation
IDENTIFIERS	Kentucky; *Kentucky Education Reform Act 1990; *Policy Implementation

ABSTRACT

In 1989, the Kentucky Supreme Court ruled that Kentucky's education system was unconstitutional and invalidated the entire body of school law. In response, the General Assembly passed the Kentucky Education Reform Act of 1990 (KERA), a completely new educational system. This report upon the 10th anniversary of KERA's passage documents how key reforms have been implemented during the past decade and what impact they are having on the education of Kentucky's children. The report has four sections. A narrative section provides profiles of a dozen Kentucky schools and how the reform initiatives have changed them. These schools vary greatly in geography and demographics and include rural and urban schools, but are all scoring well on Kentucky's core content tests and have some important characteristics in common. An implementation section describes each key element of reform and includes such data as the number of students or schools served or affected, annual funds allocated, and perceived effectiveness. The reforms include extended school services, family resource/youth services centers, financial equity among school districts, expanded preschool programs, flexible grouping in primary grades, professional development, school-based decisionmaking, and technology investment. A results section documents the impact KERA has had on school improvement and student achievement through numerous graphs. A timeline highlights major milestones in the implementation of the new system. A final section highlights areas that need improvement and poses questions concerning policy issues in these areas. (TD)

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Reading Center
A Decade of Difference

RESULTS MATTER

A Decade of Difference in Kentucky's Public Schools

1990-2000

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EDUCATION PAYS

April 11, 2000

Dear Fellow Kentuckian:

On this date 10 years ago, the Kentucky Education Reform Act of 1990 was signed into law. It was recognized immediately as the most ambitious and comprehensive education package ever conceived by any state — and the work of the past decade has certainly confirmed that.

We undertook it because we had to *do* something.

Our state ranked at or near the bottom of the nation in virtually every measure of educational quality, and it had for generations. In 1989, the state Supreme Court declared the public school system both inadequate and unconstitutional. The high court invalidated the entire body of school law. It required the General Assembly to start over.

The law that was signed 10 years ago created — from scratch — a whole new system of powerful programs to raise academic achievement in our schools. It challenged us to change what we believed about our children and their capacities. It required us to confront our responsibilities to them, to their future and to the future of this state.

The historic events we are celebrating this year deserve recognition on a grand scale. The court ruling and the passage of this law gave Kentucky a grand legal vision for the future of its children.

This is also a time to celebrate the tens of thousands of parents, teachers, local educators and community leaders who have been working so hard to transform that grand legal vision into reality. Their hard work has resulted not just in the implementation of new programs — but in the real, measurable improvements in student learning that we are now beginning to see in Kentucky.

The real reform — breathing life and learning into the law — takes place, or does not take place, in each individual school building and classroom, and in every Kentucky community. So each school has its own beginnings, and its own important anniversaries.

Kentucky's education reform isn't new anymore, and in fact, it is really no longer a reform. It is our system of public education now, and it is getting results. All demographic groups of Kentucky children are learning more than they were 10 years ago. And they are achieving at higher levels now, compared to their peers in the rest of the nation, than they ever have before. We aren't yet where we want to be. We have a lot of work still to do. But we are on the right track and headed in the right direction.

Anniversaries provide wonderful opportunities to celebrate. They also cause us to reflect and evaluate. The first group of children educated entirely under the programs initiated in 1990 will graduate from high school in 2004. Their 10th reunion will be in the year 2014. That is also the year we expect to reach our long-term goal of academic proficiency in every Kentucky school.

While we celebrate this anniversary and the progress we have made, we need to stay focused on that next anniversary, on the long-term goal of proficiency by 2014, and on all the work that each of us in Kentucky must do to get us there.

Sincerely,

Helen K. Mountjoy

Helen Mountjoy, Chair
Kentucky Board of Education

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About This Report

"Results Matter" is the Kentucky Department of Education's report to the people upon the 10th anniversary of the signing of the Kentucky Education Reform Act of 1990.

Its purpose is limited to documenting how the key reform programs have been implemented during the past decade, and what impact they are having on improving the education of Kentucky's children.

The report is divided into four sections.

A narrative section provides profiles, in words and pictures, of a dozen Kentucky schools and how the new reform initiatives have changed what takes place inside them. These schools vary greatly in geography and demographics. They have approached reform in some different ways. But they are all scoring well on Kentucky's Core Content Tests and, as you will soon see, they have some important characteristics in common. It must be pointed out that there are many more diverse schools that share these characteristics, and there are still some schools that don't.

Two data sections document implementation and results. They show how each key element of reform has been implemented during the past 10 years — in effect, how a new educational infrastructure was built. They also document the impact this new system has had on school improvement and student achievement to date.

A timeline highlights major milestones in the implementation of our new system of education.

The data in the report show progress worth celebrating, and also cause a sense of urgency to keep improving.

- School funding is far more equitable now. SEEK has narrowed the per-pupil spending gap between the wealthiest and poorest districts. The gap was $1,199 in 1989-90, and $757 in 1998-99.
- All demographic groups of Kentucky children are achieving at higher levels now than when we began, according to state test results.
- Kentucky children are performing better — in comparison to their peers nationally —than they ever have before, according to the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), commonly known as "the nation's report card."
- According to the Comprehensive Test of Basic Skills, some of Kentucky's highest-achieving schools are also among its highest-poverty schools.
- Scores on the national ACT have remained basically flat — but many more Kentucky students are taking the test and aspiring to higher education. And the core courses that are known to result in higher ACT scores are now high school graduation requirements in Kentucky.
- Kentucky is a national leader in education technology.
- The state dropout rate, which is about in the middle nationally according to the National Council for Education Statistics, has not improved significantly since 1990.
- Race and gender achievement gaps have not been eliminated.
- Public opinion surveys show broad and growing support for our system of education and for our local public schools.

Acknowledgements: This report was produced by the Kentucky Department of Education's Office of Communications. Hunt C. Helm, associate commissioner; Armando Arrastia, director of public information; Robyn Oatley, director of community relations; Tacy Groves, director of media services. Jim Parks, press secretary, wrote the school profiles. Mike Gray designed the report. Rick McComb took the photos.

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Introduction

From the 1950s through the 1980s, Kentucky made several significant attempts to improve the quality of public schools. In 1953, Kentucky's Constitution was amended to allow state aid to be based on actual attendance rather than total school-age population and to be spent for more than just teacher salaries. In the 1960s, the sales tax was adopted and then increased from 3 percent to 5 percent. Education spending was increased, and standards for teachers and schools were raised periodically.

Despite those efforts, Kentucky in the mid-1980s still ranked at or near the bottom of the nation in most measures of educational quality.

In 1984, the legislature passed the School Improvement Act, a measure widely known as the "academic bankruptcy law."

It was cutting-edge legislation at the time — only New Jersey and South Carolina had passed similar legislation, and only in the previous year.

The academic bankruptcy law gave the Kentucky Department of Education the authority to "take over" any school district that failed to meet certain performance standards. The performance standards were attendance rates, dropout rates and test scores.

The idea was that good districts have good attendance, low dropout rates and good test scores. Good districts get students to come to school regularly, keep them there until they graduate from high school and teach them enough to advance successfully into college, military service or a full-time job.

Districts that failed to achieve these results could be declared "bankrupt" and put into state receivership under that 1984 law.

Six years before the reforms of 1990, Kentucky had decided that all districts should meet the same performance standards and that the state should hold its schools accountable for results.

But, in those days, Kentucky's wealthiest districts had on average about twice as much money as its poorest districts to spend on each child. And the districts with the fewest resources generally had the most students with serious educational obstacles to overcome.

In 1985, 66 of the poorer school districts formed an organization, the Council for Better Education. It hired Bert Combs, the former governor and former federal judge, as its lawyer. The council's basic position was that every child deserves an opportunity to learn, that an expectation of equal results should entail equal resources.

Four years later, the 66 districts prevailed. Their quest for fundamental fairness led to an historic decision by Kentucky's Supreme Court in 1989.

Jacob Henry, Vanessa Walton, Longest Elementary, Muhlenburg County Schools

Introduction

Kentucky's Constitution says, "The General Assembly shall, by appropriate legislation, provide for an efficient system of common schools throughout the State." In its 1989 decision, the Kentucky Supreme Court defined "efficient system" in terms of "equity, adequacy and uniformity." And it concluded that Kentucky's education system failed the test on every count. Thus the whole system was unconstitutional.

"Each child, every child, in this Commonwealth must be provided with an equal opportunity to have an adequate education," the court declared.

The 1990 General Assembly responded aggressively to this challenge, and so did Gov. Wallace Wilkinson.

After 10 months of public hearings and meetings with national experts, the General Assembly enacted the Kentucky Education Reform Act of 1990.

Kentucky's reform initiative was quickly recognized nationwide as the most comprehensive education package ever conceived by a state and indeed, the act made major changes in every part of Kentucky's educational system: how schools were financed; how decisions were made and who made them; what kind of learning was expected from students; what kind of performance was expected from teachers, administrators and school boards.

The overriding principle of the reform was that all children can learn at high levels, given time, effort and opportunity. To get this job done, Kentucky's new system of public education would:

- provide equitable resources for all districts and schools;
- provide extra resources to those districts and schools with a lot of children who come to school with disadvantages;
- eliminate political barriers to good schools — such as nepotism, cronyism and patronage;
- set high standards for the performance of all children, all teachers, all schools and all districts;
- provide a statewide network of technology and communication tools to support teachers and students;
- empower local schools to make the decisions that would affect their own learning environments;
- hold schools accountable for reaching the new standards;
- reward successful schools; and
- help unsuccessful schools.

So how did the 1990 Reform Act put these principles into operation? The reform made school funding more equitable. Kentucky no longer has "rich" and "poor" districts. Every child in the commonwealth, rich or poor, urban, suburban or rural, is supported by about the same number of dollars.

The new system set the same achievement goals for every Kentucky child and for every Kentucky school. The reform act says: "Schools shall expect a high level of achievement of all students."

Steven Hoagland, Southern Elementary, Fayette County Schools

Introduction

It defines achievement not merely as the ability to memorize stand-alone facts, but to use knowledge to solve problems and to communicate solutions in writing. It replaced short multiple-choice tests with comprehensive performance tests that require students to demonstrate what they know and can do.

The new law recognized that schools with high proportions of economically disadvantaged students need extra help. So it provided a preschool program for at-risk children; an Extended School Services Program for students falling behind in one or more subjects; Family Resource and Youth Services Centers to help students and families overcome health and economic barriers to learning.

The reform instigated a process that resulted in detailed definitions of what students at various grade levels should know and be able to do in each major subject area.

It set goals for schools, and tested students to measure how well schools were meeting those goals.

It created school-based decision making councils — typically three teachers, two parents and the principal. It gave these local councils the authority to make decisions concerning curriculum, staffing and other matters affecting learning in their building.

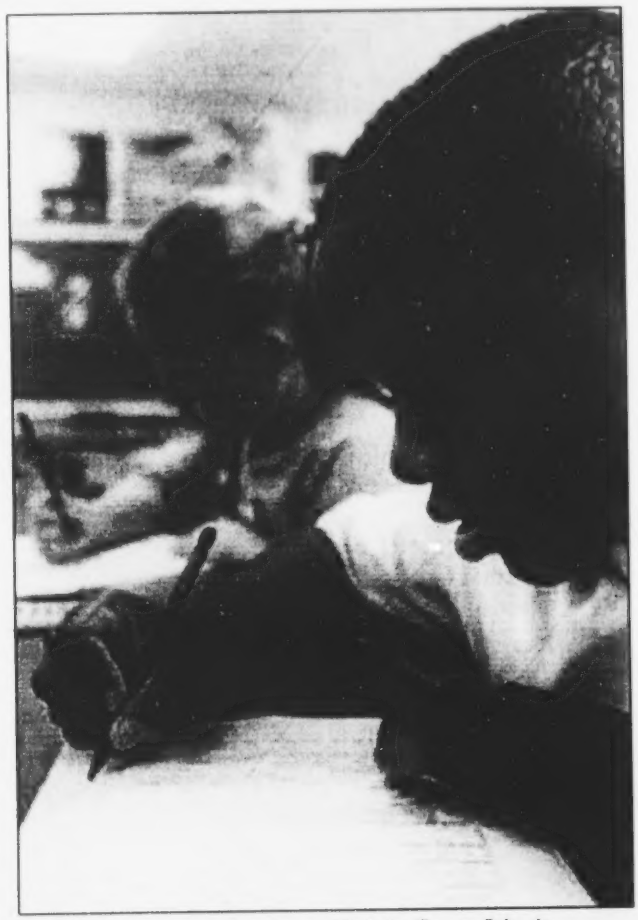
The Reform Act also created a network of eight regional service centers to provide more opportunities for intervention and collaboration among the Department of Education, schools and districts.

And so — for the first time in history — Kentucky schools had equitable funding, extra help with at-risk children, clear goals for learning and high standards for performance.

And Kentucky's new system of public education recognized that results matter — that the single most important measure of a school's quality is how much its students know and are able to do.

As important as the Supreme Court ruling was, as powerful as the Reform Act was, real change takes place — or doesn't — in each individual school building.

What follows are profiles of a few of the many schools that accepted the KERA challenge and are making it work for their students a decade later.



Jesse Haskins, Belmont Elementary, Christian County Schools

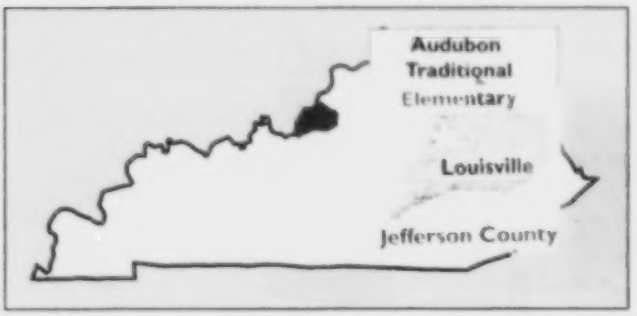
School Profiles

Audubon Traditional Elementary
Jefferson County

Exposed and re-exposed ➤ marbles, rulers and Newton ➤ "looking at children more than the program" ➤ a refusal to lower the standards "no matter what"

Nancy Boyd has a laminated copy of the Jefferson County standards for elementary science posted on her classroom wall at Audubon Traditional Elementary School in Jefferson County. As she covers each standard, she marks it off with a felt-tipped pen. This way, she can be sure she covers everything with the four grades she teaches during the year.

It also means that students who spend their first four years at Audubon will be exposed and re-exposed to the fundamental science principles and content outlined in the state's Core Content for Assessment. They'll learn science. And they'll be ready to shine when they take the state's proficiency tests at the end of the 4th-grade.



While Young explains this focus on standards and content to a visitor, her 4th-grade students are rolling marbles down the pencil grooves in a pair of plastic rulers. The rulers are taped together at one end, and each of the other ends is propped up on a one-inch plastic cup to create a shallow V. The students have eight marbles. Seven of the marbles are lined up in the bottom of the V. The other one is rolled down the groove into the row of seven.

The students, working around round tables in groups of four, roll the single marble several times. With each impact, the marble on the opposite end of the row shoots about halfway up the ramp on the other side. Students begin to notice that it goes about the same distance each time, and one of them scribbles the measurement in a notebook. Then they roll two marbles, then three, and finally four, talking about what they see and recording their observations each time.

It's a lesson on Newton's Third Law of Motion: for every action, there is an equal and opposite reaction. Then they get to the "what if?" part of the exercise. What if you change a variable, for example, the size of the marble being rolled down the groove or the elevation of one side of the V? Actually, students at some of the tables are already beginning to experiment with the variables before Young gives the go-ahead signal. Later, the students will write about Newton's Third Law of Motion, as an entry in their writing portfolios or as an answer to an open-response question on a class test.

This is happening in a *traditional* school? Yes.

The nonprofit Council for Better Education, composed of 66 school districts, seven boards of education, and 22 public school students, files suit in Franklin Circuit Court challenging the equity and adequacy of funding for public education.

The leadership of the General Assembly appoints the Task Force on Education Reform, composed of the leadership of the House and Senate and appointees of the Governor. The task force's three committees — Curriculum, Governance and Finance — work with consultants to build a new system of education.

November 1985 | **October 1988** | **June 1989** | **July 1989**

Franklin Circuit Judge Ray Corns rules that the General Assembly has failed to provide an efficient system of common schools and that the system of school financing is inefficient and discriminatory.

The Kentucky Supreme Court upholds Corns' ruling, saying the system of common schools in Kentucky is unconstitutional and invalidating the entire body of public school law in Kentucky.

Audubon Traditional Elementary

Audubon was created in the 1970s as a traditional districtwide magnet school as part of Jefferson County's plan to desegregate while minimizing court-ordered busing. In Audubon's case, traditional originally meant "the old-fashioned way of learning," according to principal Angela French-Coles. And much about Audubon fits the traditional mold. The Pledge of Allegiance is a daily ritual; there's a strict dress code; homework and discipline are emphasized; parent involvement is expected, and traditional textbooks are used regularly.

But state accountability, new state and district learning standards, and French-Coles' desire to be competitive with other traditional schools are bringing change. "We still use textbooks, but we use them in a different way," French-Coles said. Writing was emphasized from the beginning of state reform; open-response questions are used across the curriculum. Curriculum realignment four years ago, and French-Coles' constant reminders to teachers, have brought increased focus on the core content.

Ethan McClellan, Doran Chambers, Audubon Traditional Elementary School, Jefferson County Schools

There's much more attention to the achievement of all children. "More teachers are looking at different methods for reaching kids," French-Coles said. Students are assigned to teachers based partly on learning styles. Students who thrive in the more traditional classrooms are assigned to the more traditional teachers. Those who respond best to non-traditional approaches get non-traditional teachers. "We're looking at children more than the program now," French-Coles said.

There's a new emphasis on teamwork. Some teachers now work as teaching teams – two teachers sharing responsibility for 46 primary students, for example. There are also "vertical" teams: teachers from each of the grade levels from preschool through grade 4 who focus on the continuity in teaching subject matter and skills.

While Audubon is located in an older neighborhood just across Preston Street from the State Fairgrounds, it draws its students from all over the county, including a sizeable contingent from suburban Jeffersontown and about 150 minority students (a fourth of the school population). The parents include a fairly high proportion of professionals and full-time moms who do a lot of volunteer work at the school. But 21 percent of the children qualify for free or reduced-priced meals, and veteran teachers have noticed more and more children from single-parent households over the years.

The Task Force on Education Reform issues its final report. The General Assembly leadership and the Governor jointly develop a plan for funding the new education system, which includes a tax increase.

The Kentucky Education Reform Act takes effect.

The Council on School Performance Standards, whose members are appointed by the Governor, expands its membership, to include more than 100 educators, to frame goals for Kentucky's schools and define expectations for its students.

March 1990

April 1990

July 1990

House Bill 940, the Kentucky Education Reform Act, is approved by the 1990 General Assembly and signed into law by Governor Wallace Wilkinson.

Audubon Traditional Elementary

The demographics make little difference to French-Coles. She believes the most powerful aspect of reform is accountability and the attendant emphasis on the effectiveness of teaching and successful learning by every student.

The focus on results placed Audubon in the top 4 percent of elementary schools in the state last year with an overall score just under 80. That average included a score of 105 in math. You can count on one hand the elementary schools with math scores better than Audubon's.

"We have the same high expectations and standards for all kids," French-Coles said. "We never lower our standards, no matter what."

Nancy Boyd, Semone Chambers, Audubon Traditional Elementary School, Jefferson County Schools

Preschool programs begin providing services to at-risk 4-year-olds from low income families and 3- and 4-year-olds with disabilities.
September 1990
Long-range professional development plans are approved for 16 consortia serving the 176 school districts.
January 1991
California educator Thomas C. Boysen is appointed the first commissioner of education.
March 1991
The new State Board for Elementary and Secondary Education assumes its duties.

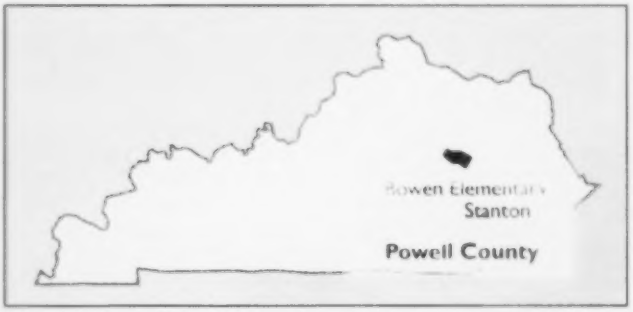
Bowen ElementaryPowell County

The district supports professional development ➤ a focus on learning goals and teaching gaps ➤ a basic shift in strategy ➤ the textbooks were too easy

The people who work at Bowen Elementary School in Powell County have students performing at very high levels on state tests of academic achievement.

But it's not because of parental wealth or the educational achievement of parents. More than half the Bowen students qualify for free or reduced-priced lunches. Most of the employed parents work in factories an hour or so west toward Lexington.

Bowen staff cite a focus on curriculum and professional development in academic content areas. From the beginning of reform, the district supported professional development of teachers as a key to success. The district brought in a science consultant to work with all the science teachers in the district on the science curriculum. Then, it brought in a math consultant. Social studies was the 1999 district-wide priority.



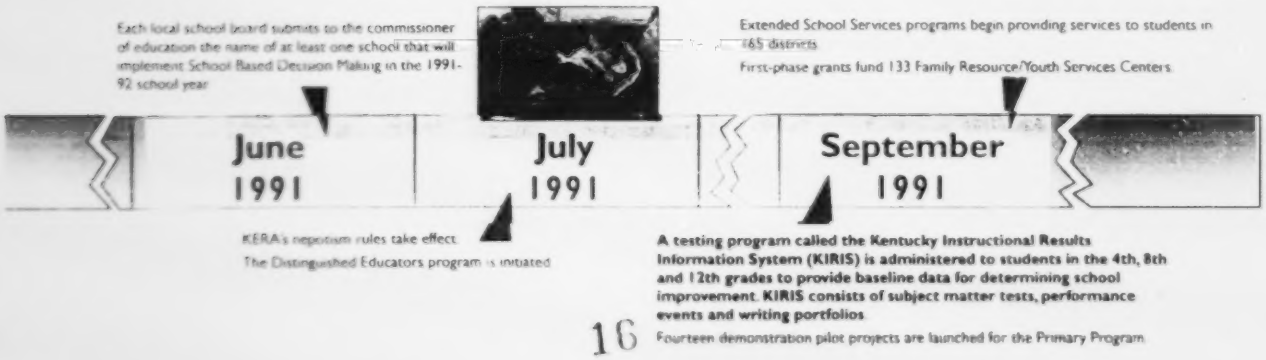
In the meantime, teachers were free to pursue professional development opportunities on their own. "If our professional development was bad, it was our own fault, because we chose it," said Bowen science teacher Jennifer Francis.

The school also did a lot of in-house professional development. It used professional development days as a faculty to meet together to analyze state learning goals — Academic Expectations, core content and the Program of Studies — and the test scores of their students.

As a result, they focused their work — on learning goals for students and gaps in their teaching. They set goals and established priorities. They shifted their strategy from teachers lecturing to students doing.

In the first few years after the reform act was passed, Bowen was doing well. The new state finance formula gave Bowen more money for supplies; for Extended School Services to give extra help to the students who need it; for professional development; for Family Resource Centers to help families deal with social problems; for a preschool program to help students at risk; and for technology.

Reform brought all of these new resources to Bowen, the school used them well, and its test scores went up. Then one year, scores dipped, including reading scores. "It was kind of personal," said Sherrie Jones, the 4th-grade language arts teacher.


Each local school board submits to the commissioner of education the name of at least one school that will implement School Based Decision Making in the 1991-92 school year
June 1991
KERA's nepotism rules take effect.
The Distinguished Educators program is initiated.
July 1991
Extended School Services programs begin providing services to students in 765 districts.
First-phase grants fund 133 Family Resource/Youth Services Centers.
September 1991
A testing program called the Kentucky Instructional Results Information System (KIRIS) is administered to students in the 4th, 8th and 12th grades to provide baseline data for determining school improvement. KIRIS consists of subject matter tests, performance events and writing portfolios.
Fourteen demonstration pilot projects are launched for the Primary Program.

Bowen Elementary

She had been an innovative teacher all along, embracing the challenges, a veteran focused on the learning of her students. She also thought she was a good writer and a good writing teacher — until the reform act came along with a focus on audience, purpose and voice. She had to learn writing and the teaching of writing all over again. She adapted; she taught writing — and reading — the new way, and her students did well on state tests.

After a dip in student test scores, she didn't panic. She went back and looked at the Core Content for Assessment, the learning standards. The next year, she focused more on core content: she covered fewer topics, but in much more depth. Student performance bounced back.

Francis, the science teacher, is a relatively new teacher — her first year, 1992, was the first year of the new state tests. The questions required higher levels of learning than traditional tests. "One of the biggest things I've learned: kids will do what you expect," she said.

Jennifer Francis, Bowen Elementary, Powell County Schools

The State Board for Elementary and Secondary Education approves the council's "valued outcomes," which set forth what students should know and be able to do by the time they exit high school.

The department establishes eight Regional Service Centers to help schools and districts implement the new reform programs.

The Kentucky Education Technology System (KETS) Master Plan is developed.

The State Board for Elementary and Secondary Education approves the Master Plan for Education Technology.

December 1991

January 1992

April 1992

May 1992

370 schools have School-Based Decision Making councils.

The Kentucky Association of School Councils is formed to help school councils increase their effectiveness.

Nearly 150,000 students in 4th, 8th and 12th grades participate in KIRIS tests.

The 1992 General Assembly gives school districts the option to use up to five days of instruction for professional development, in addition to the four days already required and allows the State Board for Elementary and Secondary Education to manage districts that exhibit poor governance.

Bowen Elementary

The result of higher expectations at Bowen is that math textbooks written for the 3rd-grade level are being used with younger students. Sherrie Jones can now begin working with her 4th graders on reading and writing at a higher level because they come to her much better prepared as a result of the Primary Program.

First-year principal G.G. Short, formerly a 4th-grade teacher at Bowen, explains the school's success this way. "We have really good kids. They're motivated."

But much of that motivation comes from the professionals in the school. They have made attendance — already good — a priority. Their strategy is not to crack down on truancy, but to prevent it. "What you're doing in the classroom is what makes them want to come," Short said. "You can feel the caring in this building. We have a real team."

The teamwork, caring and focus on learning got Bowen up to 80 on the state's performance index in 1999, making it one of the top dozen elementary performers in the state. In three subjects — reading, writing and math — the scores were nearly at 90, just a few points away from the 2014 goal of 100.

Stevie Rogers, Bowen Elementary, Powell County Schools

504 schools have School-Based Decision Making councils.
Preliminary curriculum frameworks for language arts, mathematics, vocational studies and the Primary Program are developed and disseminated.

The Primary Program is introduced in the state's 830 elementary schools.
The Kentucky Supreme Court upholds KERA's anti-nepotism rules.

Baseline scores from the KIRIS testing program are calculated, and thresholds for improvement are set.
600 schools have School-Based Decision Making councils.

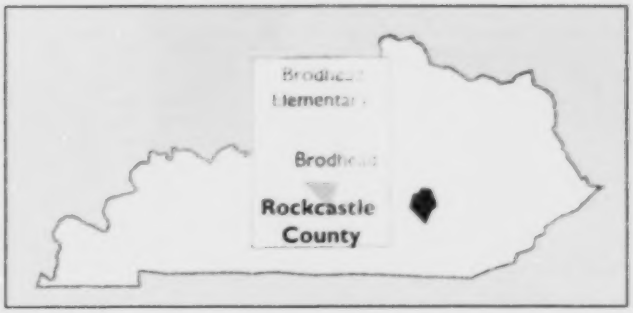
June 1992 | July 1992 | September 1992 | January 1993

The Principals Assessment Center and Superintendents Training Program and Assessment Center are established.

All 176 districts offer Extended School Services programs.
Preliminary curriculum frameworks for science, social studies, practical living and arts and humanities are developed and disseminated.

Brodhead Elementary Rockcastle County

A 20-year veteran likes what he sees ➤ trust-building exercises ➤ a long-range plan ➤ experts brought in ➤ changing attitudes ➤ a focused staff ➤ "I believe in our children"



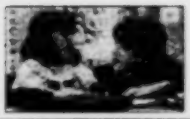
In 1989, Brodhead Elementary School Assistant Principal Mark McKinney carefully followed the work of the Kentucky Task Force on Education Reform. As each of the reform recommendations emerged — more money and more fair funding for historically underfunded schools, School-Based Decision Making, accountability, curbs on nepotism — McKinney liked what he saw.

Though somewhat radical in terms of education tradition, they squared with his experiences over nearly 20 years as a teacher and administrator in a poor, predominantly rural school district that was no stranger to the vagaries of school board politics. The reform recommendations also fit his ideas about how children learn.

The next year, as the new principal of Brodhead, McKinney got his opportunity to tackle reform head-on and hands-on. By 1999, Brodhead's 500 students were among the state's top performers, and McKinney's liking of reform had become a passion.

Brodhead is not necessarily the first place you would look for such passion, or such performance. Located on State Highway 150, halfway between Crab Orchard and Mt. Vernon where Bowman Branch and Negro Creek meet to form the Dix River, Brodhead (population 1,200) was once a thriving railroad town, complete with railroad jobs, a depot, hotels and nice restaurants downtown.

All that is gone now. The jobs. The depot. The tracks. The hotels and restaurants. The dominant downtown structure is a feed mill that serves the farmers who raise cattle along the narrow bottoms and hills of the surrounding countryside. In the town, there are nearly as many mobile homes as neat middle-class homes built among the prosperity of decades past. Most of the parents of Brodhead students work in factories, some of them as far away as Lexington and Georgetown. More than half the students qualify for the federal free or reduced-price lunch program.



The State Board for Elementary and Secondary Education disseminates Transformations: Kentucky's Curriculum Framework to assist educators as they develop curriculum components.

The Kentucky Supreme Court upholds the authority of school councils to determine specific aspects of school operations.

July 1993 | **September 1993** | **November 1993**

Groups critical of Kentucky's new education system begin a campaign to discredit the program and publish a booklet of purported curriculum themes and test items they consider inappropriate.

Brodhead Elementary

The Brodhead school — established in 1888 — is perched on a plateau above downtown. One part was built in 1929, and another part was constructed by the WPA (Works Progress Administration) in 1939. The two parts were connected, and a gym was added, in 1951. It has stayed pretty much the same since, even as it made the transition from high school to elementary school.

About the time McKinney became principal, he participated in a business-oriented management-training program in Louisville that emphasized building trust, working with people and teamwork. That fit right in with several reform ideas, including the Primary Program, School-Based Decision Making and school accountability.

So he did trust-building exercises in staff meetings. In one, teachers and other staff members held McKinney suspended horizontally above their heads. "I didn't know what would happen," he said. "He loved it," said a teacher. Then he set about building teams, including food service and janitorial staff and other classified staff. Parents whose "point of view was critical" to success, participated through the school council. "We dispelled the notion that some people are more important than others."

In the beginning, Brodhead Elementary didn't try to do all of reform at once. It developed a long-term plan that stretched implementation over a 6- to 7-year period. It concentrated on one or two new elements each year.

Initially, part of the implementation had to do with changing attitudes. "Our parents thought we had a pretty good school," McKinney said. But he knew that by national standards it had a long way to go. "I set about building the idea that things could be better." In the atmosphere of trust, people were encouraged to try new things. It was okay to fail. Different Ways of Knowing and applying

Monica Childress, Susan Coffey, Brodhead Elementary, Rockcastle County Schools

Anti-reform forces hold a rally at the state Capitol, drawing 400 protesters.

Letcher County becomes the first district to be taken over by the state as a result of financial, operational and instructional problems.

January 1994 | **April 1994** | **June 1994**

The General Assembly allows school councils to determine organization of the primary program, including the extent to which multi-age groups are used.

the concepts of multiple intelligences helped change staff perceptions of the way children learn.

The staff decided that writing was the key. The new state tests required students to write. Writing is also very closely related to reading, and reading is fundamental to learning about science, math, social studies and everything else.

Brodhead decided that sending teachers off to conferences for professional development was not the best approach. So they brought experts into Brodhead to work with the whole staff on specific priorities.

Today, Brodhead has been fully transformed.

Teamwork, shared decision making and consensus are pervasive. Each new initiative is tackled by a team. Teachers teach in teams of two, and each team includes an instructional aide. Teachers have 30 minutes of planning time every day while the aides take the students to the playground or the gym. Teachers help out in the cafeteria at times, and food service people help in classrooms.

Open-response questions — the kind used on state tests — are used routinely in all classes at Brodhead. There is no "practicing for the test."

Parent participation is strong. For four years in a row, 100 percent of students have been represented by a parent or guardian in teacher conferences at the school.

"We keep standards and expectations high," said Susan Coffey, a six-year teacher at Brodhead. Coffey and others focus on what they described as "meaningful, purposeful" learning. "The children have to see it — understand why it is important to them. I try to tap into the child's interests and relate that to core content." For example, Coffey is teaching history by starting with Brodhead as it is today and working backwards. The students' research will be the start of what Coffey envisions as a Brodhead history museum at the school.

"I believe in our children, I believe in our staff, I believe in our programs," said teacher Kathy Dyehouse. "All kids can learn, but not all learn the same way."

Kristen Baker, Brodhead Elementary, Rockcastle County Schools

Such thinking has put Brodhead students in the top 3 percent in the state academically. The school's scores in reading, math and writing — 90, 89, and 85, respectively — are within striking distance of the state goal of 100 by the year 2014. Ways to raise performance in other areas have already been implemented or are being discussed by teachers, teams and the school council.

Coffey cites another factor in Brodhead's progress: leadership that keeps staff focused. "The best human beings have to be focused and have to be reminded of that focus," she said.

All real property subject to local taxation is assessed at 100 percent of its fair cash value, as required by the Kentucky Constitution.

The Student Technology Leadership Program is launched.

All 176 districts have approved technology plans.

July 1994 — **September 1994** — **November 1994**

The Department of Education distributes Content Guidelines, which define what students will be tested on in KIRIS.

West Louisville Elementary Daviess County

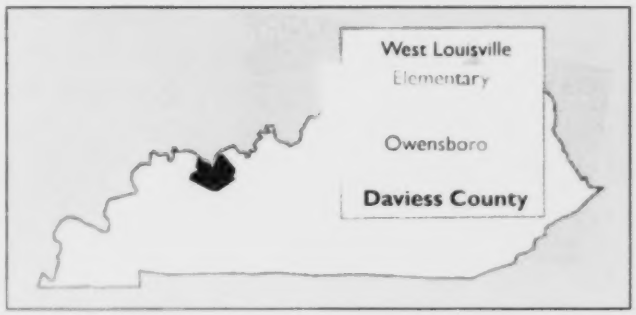
Requests for visits pour in ➤ every minute counts ➤ still teaching the grammar ➤ each of us feels personally responsible

There was a time when veteran teacher Sandra Keller looked forward to school assemblies. They were an enjoyable break from the work of the classroom. But Keller views them differently now; she's often concerned that they take away from her teaching time in the classroom.

Reform and its accountability features have made time — and the effective use of it — a constant concern.

In fact, in 1999 West Louisville declared a moratorium on visitors from other schools in order to preserve the maximum possible time for teaching. Requests for visits began pouring in after state test scores for West Louisville, a rural elementary school in Western Daviess County, began to soar, putting this farming community school in the company of suburban schools serving the children of mostly high-income professionals.

Its overall score of 87 included a 107 in reading, Keller's specialty. Maintaining that kind of performance means that every minute counts.



West Louisville has improved its performance under reform by maintaining its traditional methods — "We still have an English book and teach the grammar," Keller said — while adding on and blending in elements of reform.

They added regular use of open-response questions, writing portfolios and a strong general emphasis on writing. "When we read, we write," Keller said. But this school has continued to use basal readers and to teach phonics.

A new accelerated reading program features a series of works of literature followed by regular tests that students take via computer, one of many increasing uses of technology in classrooms.

It's all grounded in the state's Core Content for Assessment, which Keller describes as "my Bible." Science teacher Dawn Young keeps her core content document on her desk and checks the concepts and skills as she teaches them.

While teachers say they are doing more group work and more "hands on" activities in classrooms, discipline and homework retain a strong focus. Instead of using a "canned" commercial program, the faculty did its own research and developed its own approach to discipline. Homework is regularly assigned; students who have trouble getting it done at home are assigned to the after-school Extended School Services program.

The Department of Education announces that nearly 480 schools with 13,500 teachers will share $26 million in rewards as a result of their performance on the 1992-94 KIRIS tests. Fifty-three schools are in the decline category, making them eligible for assistance from Distinguished Educators.

The Office of Education Accountability releases its review of the measurement quality of KIRIS, which says that KIRIS is "seriously flawed" and should be revised.

December 1994

The State Board for Elementary and Secondary Education becomes the Kentucky Board of Education.

February 1995

June 1995

Thomas C. Boysen, Kentucky's first commissioner of education, resigns.

August 1995

Louisiana educator Wilmer S. Cody is selected as Kentucky's second commissioner of education.

West Louisville Elementary

The Daviess County district — whose elementary students' scores across the district place it among the top half dozen in the state — has provided strong support through professional development and districtwide committees that focus on curriculum and instruction.

With a manufactured housing development expanding nearby, the school's once stable student population is growing and becoming more diverse. That too is heightening concern about using all the minutes and resources well.

Kentucky's tests measure what students are learning. Said Keller: "Each of us feels personally responsible for our test scores."

Rex Robinson, Neil Carter, West Louisville Elementary, Daviess County Schools

All 176 Kentucky school districts are linked by a high-speed electronic network for voice, video and data exchange.

The Department of Education launches its official site on the Internet: **www.kde.state.ky.us.**

September 1995

October 1995

November 1995

January 1996

The University of Kentucky releases findings from its first study of the preschool program, showing that children in the program had greater rates of social and academic development than their peers who were not in the program.

A report from the Kentucky Institute on Education Reform shows that elementary students spend more time writing than in the past; that higher-level writing is taught; that students engage in more real-world writing; and that teachers have changed their classroom focus as a result of the new emphasis on writing.

Western Elementary Anderson County

Teams have core content covered ➤ a building that dates to the 1930s ➤ willing to "row twice as fast" ➤ art and science in a snakeskin ➤ explain it until they get it

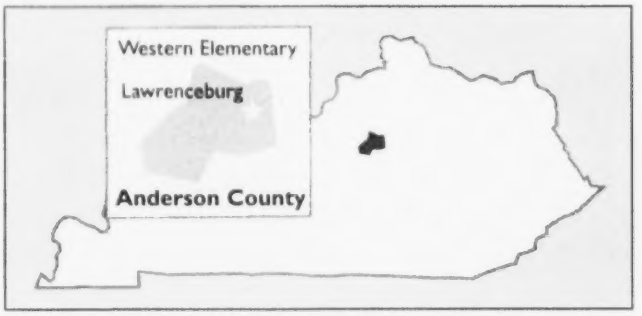
In 1999, the 5th-graders at Western Elementary School in Anderson County were among the dozen or so 5th-grade classes in Kentucky that exceeded 100 – the long-term state goal – on the mathematics portion of the new state tests.

"We do problem solving and writing every day," explains 5th-grade math teacher Sheila Stine. "We solve a problem, and then we write about it."

Her students also use computers every day to work on math, and they review constantly. There is a substantial focus on computation (addition, subtraction, multiplication, division) as well as the other concepts that are emphasized in the Core Content for Assessment. This document tells test developers, teachers and parents what topics in each subject will be tested.

"High expectations are there throughout the year," Stine said.

Stine is also the leader of the school's math team. She is responsible for working with all the other teachers to ensure that all the core content for math is being covered. The teachers also work together regularly to improve teaching techniques.



The focus on core content and a team approach from kindergarten through 5th grade doesn't just apply to math. Principal Barbara Kinney has worked with teachers and the school council to have committees and teams responsible for all aspects of all the major subject matter areas.

The focus on teaching, learning and high expectations resulted in Western being one of the top 10 elementary schools in Kentucky on the 1999 Kentucky Core Content Tests.

By the traditional kinds of measures used to size up schools, nothing about Western suggests such high levels of performance. The school sits on a narrow ridge just off curvy State Highway 62 about 15 miles west of Lawrenceburg. The surrounding landscape is dominated by cedar trees, weather-beaten tobacco barns, deep hollows, wood frame farmhouses and more than a few mobile homes. Western's building, now a hodgepodge of additions and renovations, dates to the 1930s, when it was a high school. More than half of its students qualify for free or reduced-price lunches.

"We have to row twice as fast to keep our kids up to par," Kinney said.

The Kentucky Board of Education approves a contract with a private testing firm, Advanced Systems in Measurement and Evaluation, to develop an improved KIRIS test.

A report from the University of Wisconsin-Madison shows that Kentucky's program of school-based performance goals and rewards has a positive impact on education by motivating schools to improve student performance.

March 1996 | April 1996 | May 1996 | June 1996

The General Assembly creates the Task Force on Education to review implementation of KERA; requires the Kentucky Board of Education to improve implementation and scoring of the mathematics portfolios and removes them from the accountability system; and reaffirms its April 1994 decision to allow school councils to determine the organization of the Primary Program.

The Kentucky Board of Education establishes a committee to study possible improvements in KIRIS.

Western's success has come from a relentless focus on learning and using resources creatively. "We basically focused on the core content," Kinney explained. "We realized as a school what had to be done." With Kinney's guidance, the teachers divided up the core content and the Program of Studies so that every concept and skill was somebody's responsibility. Nothing was left out.

In fact, "By-the-Book-Barbi," as she calls herself, has a "book" on each teacher. Actually, it's a three-ring binder containing the parts of the core content and Program of Studies for which each teacher is responsible. It also contains a checklist that Kinney uses regularly to see that teachers are actually covering their responsibilities.

Kinney and her staff also focused on finding creative ways to meet some of the school's needs. "We rearranged our resources," she said. "We looked at the strengths of people and changed some responsibilities. We needed more science and art. We found a way to provide that."

For example, the physical education teacher also had a background in art. So he works with science teachers to integrate art into science, doing things like teaching the art concepts of pattern, color and texture as part of a unit on animals and their adaptation to their environments. The students learn about art by studying the patterns on snake skins. The PE teacher also teaches dance — one of the arts and humanities topics — in PE class.

Zachary Yonts, Western Elementary, Anderson County Schools

All schools implement school-based decision making. Schools are exempt if they are the only schools in their districts or if they receive an exemption from the Kentucky Board of Education.

The Core Content for Assessment is distributed to schools and districts to help teachers align their curricula with the state testing system.

KIRIS scores are released, showing schools' performance on tests in the 1994-96 biennium and their reward status. Of 1,300 schools, nearly one-third are eligible for reward money. In the three lowest accountability categories, 185 schools are eligible for assistance from the state.

July 1996

August 1996

October 1996

February 1997

Results from a report issued by the RAND Institute on Education and Training show that KIRIS provides useful information about student achievement and helps encourage positive instructional change in classrooms.

Recommendations from the Commission on High School Graduation Requirements are submitted to the Kentucky Board of Education.

25

The Department of Education announces that monetary rewards for Kentucky's high-performing schools will range from a minimum of $1,155 to a maximum of $2,310 for each certified staff member. A total of $25 million is distributed to nearly 540 schools.

Western Elementary

The school puts a high priority on reading. All students are assessed three times a year. Those needing help are assigned to the after-school Extended School Services program for focused help on reading skills.

At the school council level, instead of having one committee for budgeting, one for extracurricular activities, one for curriculum, and so on, all of the committees are about curriculum. There is a committee for each major subject, and each works on the budget, extracurricular activities and other policies related to that content area. This way, the science committee, for example, not only plans the science curriculum, it also proposes a budget for science, recommends science-related extracurricular activities and advises on staffing.

The style of teaching is changing, too. Julie Bowen, a 4th-grade teacher at Western, does some traditional teaching — lecturing — to introduce her students to new ideas, concepts and content. After that, the students take on more responsibility for their learning. She has a weekly work schedule, which she presents on Monday. Her students are responsible for having the work done by Friday. Between Monday and Friday, a couple of hours each day, the students have a lot of freedom in deciding when and how they do their weekly work.

During work time, some students work on the five computers in her room, some individually, some in groups of two or three. Others work on math or read. Because her 4th- graders range in age from 9 to 12 and even more widely in reading skills, she has books in her room that go from primary through 12th-grade. The various levels of books are in baskets around the room, and students choose what they read.

It all looks very casual, but it isn't. All the time, Bowen is circulating, looking over shoulders, talking to students as individuals, giving guidance. Compared to her own experience as a student at Western before reform, she said, her students "are a lot more free to grow. But if I see nonproductive stuff going on, I stop it."

However she is teaching, she regularly tells her students: "If you don't understand it the way I'm teaching it, tell me, and I'll teach it in a different way." They do tell her, and she does teach it another way. "We just explain it until they get it," she said. And nobody falls through the cracks.

"Getting it" is the overriding focus of the school. From Kinney's by-the-book focus on curriculum to Bowen's flexibility with individual students, Western's focus is on success. "We want to do well," says Kinney.

Multiple-choice questions are added to the KIRIS assessment.

5th- and 7th-grades are added to the grades that take the KIRIS assessment.

University of Kentucky professor Edward Kifer issues a report that says KIRIS is as reliable as nationally established tests such as the ACT and the Comprehensive Test of Basic Skills.

After learning of processing and management errors, Education Commissioner Wilmer Cody recommends that the department terminate its contract with Advanced Systems in Measurement and Evaluation, the state's primary test contractor.

Results from the Comprehensive Test of Basic Skills testing show that Kentucky 3rd-, 6th- and 9th-graders are at the national average in reading, language arts and mathematics.

The Kentucky Consolidated Planning Process, which will change the way local educators plan programs and apply for federal and state funds, is implemented.

April 1997

June 1997

July 1997

August 1997

A Morehead State University study finds that writing portfolios improve students' abilities and aid their preparation for college.

Kentucky 3rd-, 6th- and 9th-graders participate in the national Comprehensive Test of Basic Skills (CTBS).

The General Assembly's Interim Joint Committee on Education approves new graduation requirements that apply to the class of 2001.

Oldham County Middle School Oldham County

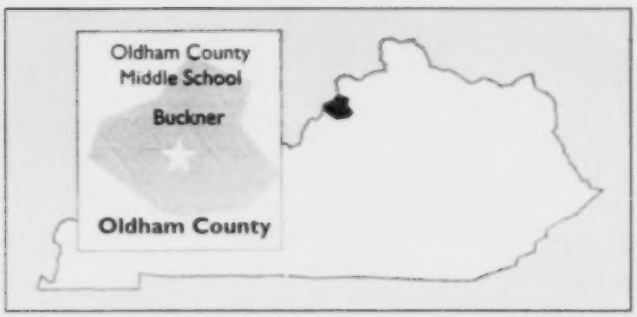
"What can we do to get better?" ➤ mold a mountain ➤ pantomiming the Constitution ➤ pre-algebra for all ➤ a vision for 2020

When homework is missing at Oldham County Middle School, the teacher is likely to pick up the cordless phone in the classroom, summon the student, walk into the hall and call a parent — usually at work. If there's a misunderstanding, it gets settled right there in the hall, on the cordless phone. The teacher, the student and the parent get back on the same page together.

When a student falls behind in a class, the student is assigned to the Extended School Services program. The student stays after school on Wednesdays and Thursdays with the teacher of that class to get extra help tailored to that student's specific needs.

Every test in 8th-grade math covers everything that has been presented from the first of the year, not just the concepts that have been taught in the last few weeks.

When the 6th-grade social studies teacher gives a geography test on landforms, the students are given Play-Doh. The questions call for students to make a mesa, mold a mountain and create a plateau out of the Play-Doh. It is a memorable learning experience.



The principal and a visitor walked into a social studies class in the middle of a test in January 2000. As part of a test on the Bill of Rights, students in turn pantomimed a constitutional right while the other students wrote their answers on the test paper.

A few years ago, Oldham Middle had a pre-algebra class for a few promising 8th-graders. Recently, it decided that all 8th-graders were ready for pre-algebra, so the 8th-grade math curriculum now is pre-algebra for everybody. How could they do it? Partly because, according to Principal Shirley Lauterbach, students arriving from the elementary schools are much better prepared these days.

A few short years ago, the Oldham County district decided that high school students should demonstrate competence in computer technology — keyboarding, word processing, spread sheets, PowerPoint presentations, database skills — in order to graduate. Now that those skills are being learned in middle school, the district is talking about making those competencies a condition of *entry* into high school.

Kentucky's education system wins the prestigious Innovations in American Government Award from Harvard University and the Ford Foundation.

James Catterall, a professor at the University of California at Los Angeles, testifies before the Kentucky Senate and House education committees that KIRIS should not be abandoned, although its validity is suspect.

September 1997

Results from a study by the Human Resources and Research Organization of Fort Knox show that schools using reform practices in the 7th and 8th grades tend to have greater gains on the 8th-grade KIRIS tests.

October 1997

December 1997

Scores from the spring 1997 KIRIS tests show improvement at all levels. Teachers at nearly one-third of schools are eligible for a share of $26 million in rewards. The statewide accountability index (the average score for all students in all subjects) has risen from 36 points to 49 points at the elementary level, from 37 points to 46 points at the middle school level, and from 35 points to 50 points at the high school level.

January 1998

Oldham County Middle School

Lauterbach tries to plan with her faculty and school council two or three years in advance. But last year, Superintendent Blake Haselton asked administrators to write 2020 Vision Papers. What are schools and kids and families and their sources of information going to be like in the year 2020, and what do we need to be doing now to be ready?

The combination of vision, planning, attention to detail and creativity has vaulted Oldham Middle into the ranks of the state's top 10 middle schools in academic performance. Its 1999 math score is only 3 points shy of the 2014 goal of 100.

Oldham Middle is appropriately named. It is in the middle of Oldham County, at Buckner just a mile and a half from the entrance to the LaGrange Reformatory, one of Kentucky's oldest state prisons. The nearest eating establishment is Backwoods Barbecue, where you eat off Styrofoam plates with plastic forks. The most prominent buildings in the area are small factories made of fabricated steel along the railroad track that connects Louisville and Cincinnati. The Oldham Middle attendance area does not include the Eastern Louisville suburbs, but it does have a couple of trailer parks. Twenty percent of its students qualify for lunch subsidies, and 15 percent have disabilities.

Oldham Middle's climb to the top really began a year before the reform act. It started with a schoolwide emphasis on study skills and the use of open-response questions on tests.

Ievon Winburn, Oldham County Middle School, Oldham County Schools

A survey of Kentucky's certified staff, conducted by the University of Kentucky, indicates that most educators are not happy with the distribution process for KIRIS rewards money.

The Kentucky Department of Education launches an on-going, multi-faceted public involvement campaign to make sure all interested parties have good information and multiple opportunities to participate in the development of the new testing system.

March 1998 | April 1998 | May 1998 | August 1998

The General Assembly directs the Department of Education to terminate KIRIS, implement an interim assessment and accountability system, and develop a new assessment and accountability system for implementation in 1998-99. It also establishes a citizens advisory council, a technical advisory council and a special legislative panel to oversee the work.

ACT scores for Kentucky students rise for the first time in six years.

Oldham County Middle School

"We did a transformation plan long before we were required to," said Lauterback, who has been at the school for 24 years as teacher, assistant principal and principal. That plan focused the school's efforts on reading. And even though the school has had formal school-based decision making for only a couple of years, "shared leadership" has been a part of the school's style for years. Through the years, the school has "systematically focused" on the state core content and learning goals.

"We have a really focused teaching staff," Lauterback said. "The attitude is, 'What can we do to get better?'"

Ben Sullivan, Oldham County Middle School, Oldham County Schools

The Kentucky Board of Education spreads state testing across all grades in high school.

The Department of Education announces that qualifications for consultants at the Regional Service Centers will be changed, moving the focus of the centers from implementation of the various elements of education reform to providing expertise in academic content areas.

The Kentucky Board of Education proposes an interim accountability model to build a bridge from KIRIS to CATS.

September 1998

CTB/McGraw-Hill is selected as the state's new testing contractor.

October 1998

December 1998

KIRIS scores for the 1996-98 biennium are released, showing school performance levels and reward status. Staff at 904 schools share in $27 million in rewards. In the two lowest accountability categories, 273 schools are eligible for state assistance.

February 1999

Highlands Middle School Ft. Thomas Independent

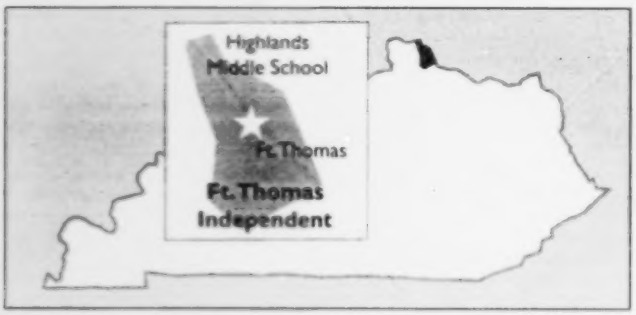
How to focus on core content ➤ leave no child behind ➤ how writing helps math ➤ "they have to give me proof"

Ft. Thomas students have always scored well on all kinds of academic tests compared to the rest of the state and the northern Kentucky region. Its athletic teams regularly win championships. Excellence is expected by parents, teachers and the community.

So it came as something of a shock a few years ago, when the middle school – even though comparatively it had very high scores – was classified as "in decline" under the state's new accountability program.

What had been a very traditional school soon began to focus on change. The middle school was separated from the high school and got its own principal, Mary Adams. The school adopted the middle school philosophy, created teams and departmentalized.

Each team was composed of four teachers and about 100 students. The teachers, each a specialist in a different subject area, coordinated their teaching and worked to make sure that no child was being left behind. Departments — all the teachers from one subject area — focused on curriculum and teaching techniques. Planning time for both teams and departments was built into the schedule.



A variety of enrichment courses was added to cover practical living and the arts.

"We really went into core content," said Adams. They focused professional development on one area — a weakness — each year.

Extended School Services funds were used for both before- and after-school programs. Students identified as at-risk – usually students who have general academic problems – are members of the Breakfast Club. Teachers work with them each morning, checking their homework, making sure they have a pencil, paper and books for the day. Students falling behind in one subject find themselves staying after school to get extra help.

Results from the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), commonly known as "the nation's report card," show that Kentucky is one of only three states to make significant gains in 4th-grade reading from 1992 to 1998 and from 1994 to 1998. The test shows that Kentucky was below the national average in 1992, at the national average in 1994 and above the national average in 1998 — a trend of continuous improvement in relation to other states. Kentucky's 8th-graders also are reading above the national average, according to the test.

Education Commissioner Wilmer Cody forms the Parent Advisory Council to provide additional input on education issues.

March 1999

April 1999

Kentucky students participate in the first CATS assessment.

The state board approves a long-term accountability plan for CATS.

The Pre-K to 16 Council is formed to bring higher education and elementary and secondary education together to work on issues.

May 1999

August 1999

As part of CATS, non-academic indicators (dropout, attendance, retention and successful transition to adult life rates) are released for the state's schools.

CTBS scores are released, showing Kentucky students near the national average on basic skills.

Highlands Middle School

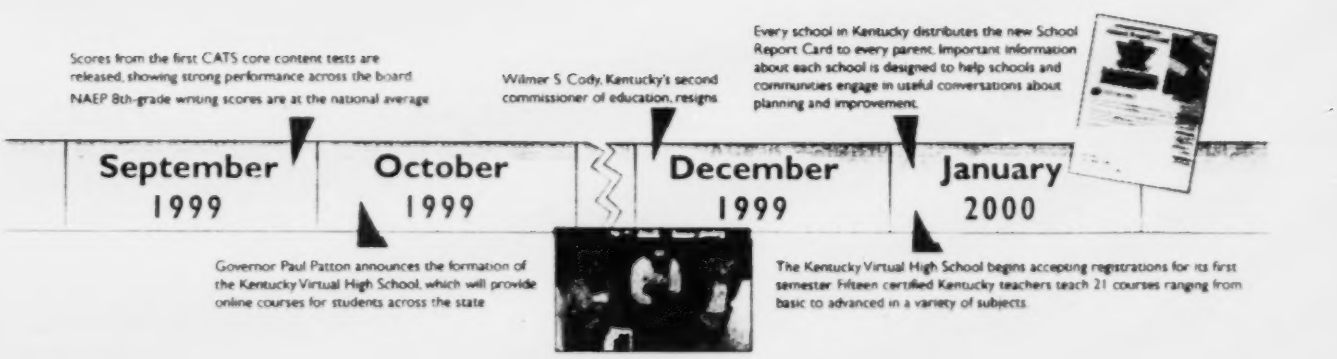
So Highlands Middle is back on track, ranking in the top echelons of middle schools around the state. And in math, in 1999, it exceeded the 2014 goal of 100 by 10 points.

At one of their monthly all-day departmental planning meetings, the Highlands math teachers talked about how they achieved their results. About four years ago, they got with the elementary schools' math teachers and decided that they would also use the same series of math textbooks. Previously, they all used different books from different publishers, which meant gaps and overlaps in content from elementary school to middle school. Core content is a constant focus.

They began to use open-response questions regularly in math class. By showing their work and explaining their answers, students reinforce their learning, said Janice Daniel, the math department leader and 8th-grade math teacher. "They have to give me proof, not just tell me whether it is true or false."

Judy Manning, the 7th-grade math teacher, credits the school's and the reform's emphasis on writing as helping math performance. Manning has also utilized a lot of concrete, hands-on activities and self-discovery learning. "We just don't give them the answers," she said. By contrast, Daniel's "approach is more abstract. That is a good balance." And it works.

Tim Hiance, Abbi Gibson, Highlands Middle School, Ft. Thomas Independent Schools


Scores from the first CATS core content tests are released, showing strong performance across the board. NAEP 8th-grade writing scores are at the national average.
Wilmer S. Cody, Kentucky's second commissioner of education, resigns.
Every school in Kentucky distributes the new School Report Card to every parent. Important information about each school is designed to help schools and communities engage in useful conversations about planning and improvement.
September 1999
October 1999
December 1999
January 2000
Governor Paul Patton announces the formation of the Kentucky Virtual High School, which will provide online courses for students across the state.
The Kentucky Virtual High School begins accepting registrations for its first semester. Fifteen certified Kentucky teachers teach 21 courses ranging from basic to advanced in a variety of subjects.

McLean County Middle SchoolMcLean County

Good girl ➤ bad doormat ➤ core content as an art form ➤ a rebellious 26-year teaching veteran "converts" ➤ building excellence from scratch ➤ "apprentice" is not acceptable

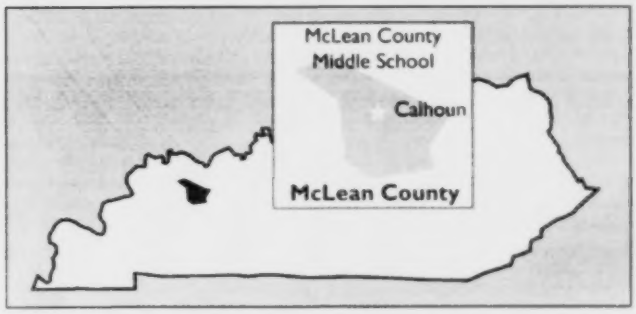
When a visitor arrived at McLean County Middle School on a recent weekday morning, Principal Julie Clark was teaching a class, filling in for a flu-stricken teacher.

Later, she was in the parking lot coaxing a frequently truant student into school. The student's mother had driven her to school, but the girl refused to get out of the car. Clark's coaxing finally succeeded.

Later, Clark excused herself briefly to move a doormat that was holding one of the school's front doors slightly ajar.

In between, Clark and teachers at the school described how they developed McLean County Middle into one of the state's top performing middle schools in a county with one stoplight.

A lot of teamwork, attention to students and a drive for perfection – right down to straightening that doormat — have a lot to do with it.



While some schools have launched reform from a tradition of excellence, the people at McLean Middle built from scratch. Before 1995, McLean had no middle school. Its elementary schools served students through grade eight.

So when the new middle school was built, there was an opportunity to create an institution and lay the foundation for a tradition of excellence. It was an opportunity, said Clark, "to get things right from the beginning."

Now in its fifth year, the building – home for 400 early adolescents – shows no signs of wear or tear. There's a reason for that. The administration and faculty – reasoning that it would be a long time before rural McLean could afford another new building – emphasized respect for the gleaming new facility. They got it.

As a new faculty, the teachers also dug into the state's Core Content for Assessment to build a solid academic program. "We're very focused on core content," Clark said. "We have that down to an art form." They divided responsibility for teaching all the concepts. They structured their program so that key concepts introduced in earlier grades are developed and reinforced during the years students will be tested on them.

Teachers have also focused professional development on content, "training that is really germane to what they're teaching," Clark said. They've also integrated the teaching of math into science and vice versa. Open-response questions are used routinely, and students write in every class.

Kentucky students participate in the second administration of the CATS assessment.

Kentucky celebrates the 10th anniversary of the passage of KERA.

10th anniversary of implementation of Extended School Services in all Kentucky schools

January through April 2000 — The Kentucky General Assembly meets in its biennial session. The key education issue is teacher quality.

April 2000

And Into the Future...

September 2002

The arts and practical living portions of core content are covered in electives and have been integrated into other classes. Different aspects of dance, for example, are covered in physical education, art and English classes. These areas of core content are also enhanced through a synergistics lab and a new Yamaha keyboarding lab.

Chelsea Wilson, Lucas Sutton, McLean County Middle School, McLean County Schools

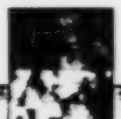
The changes – the intense focus on core content – didn't come easily for some teachers. "I was rebellious," laughed Sheila Iglehart, a 26-year veteran. It meant that she had to stop teaching things in social studies that were fun for her. But much of what she gave up really wasn't very important for students to know, she said.

McLean Middle's focus has made it one of the top dozen middle schools in the state and one of the few rural schools among the state's top scoring middle schools. The school is located just outside Calhoun, the county seat, which really does have only one stoplight. McLean is farm country. Flat, fenceless and seemingly endless fields of soybeans and corn lie along arrow-straight roads. Clusters of grain bins are the most prominent structures in the landscape. Corporate chicken farming is expanding rapidly.

Few of the students come from high-income families, and few are extremely poor, although about 40 percent qualify for free and reduced-price meals. Many of the parents work outside the county, in Owensboro or Madisonville.

"The main difference here," said science teacher Shannon Lindsey, "is the high expectations we have for students. Apprentice is not acceptable."

10th anniversary of full implementation of School-Based Decision Making



May and June 2004

The first classes of students who were educated entirely under the reform programs graduate.

July 2004

10th anniversary of 100 percent assessment of all real property in Kentucky

July 2006

October 2014

Scores from the latest CATS assessments are expected to show that all Kentucky schools have reached or exceeded the "proficient" level.

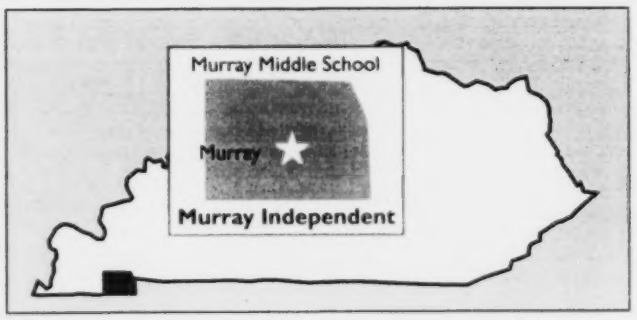
Murray Middle SchoolMurray Independent

Connecting with parents ➤ graphics calculators ➤ a Chinese abacus ➤ the principal finds a "life-saver"

History and tradition are quickly evident at Murray Middle School. Over the entrance at one end of the stately school building is a stone bearing the inscription, "Boys Entrance." At the other end, of course, is an identical stone that says "Girls Entrance." Once the Murray High School building, it is now on the National Register of Historic Places. The block on Main Street west of downtown where Murray Middle now stands has been the site of a school, including the forebear of Murray State University, for 126 years.

The tradition also includes academic excellence. "We have always been successful," said Margaret Brown, a teacher and administrator at the school for nearly three decades. As a university community, Murray has long supported its schools generously and has expected excellence. It attracted, and continues to attract, students from nearby districts that have fewer resources.

Outside forces are changing some of those dynamics. Surrounding districts, supported with new state funds, have improved their programs to become more attractive to students and parents alike. Meanwhile, Murray finds itself with a growing number of students from low-income families. About half the faculty has come to the school in recent years.

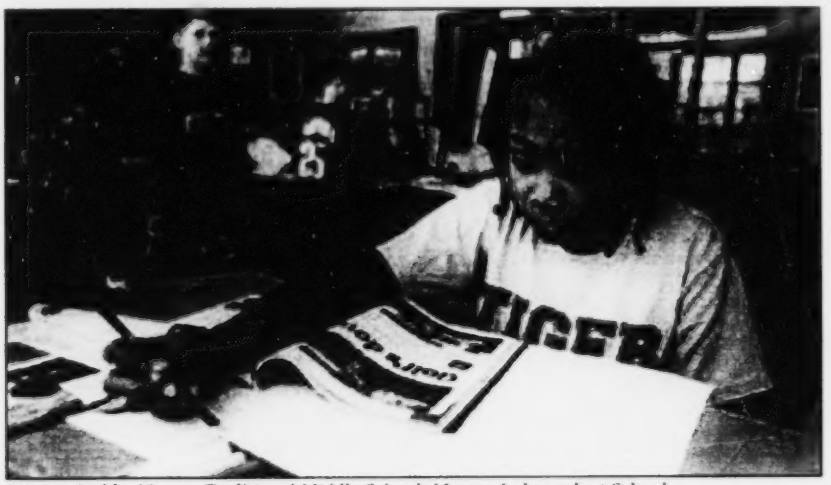


Despite the changes, Murray Middle has maintained its tradition of excellence, scoring among the top dozen middle schools in the state. Its 1999 math score was in the high 90s, just a few points short of the long-term goal of 100.

But, while Murray has maintained the traditions that have worked for it in the past, it has also tapped into the power of reform programs.

Technology, for example. Close contact with parents is another tradition being maintained, but through means made easier by the Kentucky Education Technology System network. From their home computers, using a password, parents can access their children's grades and disciplinary records and get homework assignments at any time. Parents without computers are encouraged to check homework assignments by phone if needed.

Both the district and the school have zeroed in on the state's Core Content for Assessment, which principal Steve Kroehler calls "a life- saver." Teachers regularly plan collaboratively, both within grades and across grades to ensure continuity. Professional development has been carefully integrated with curriculum goals.



Brianna Fields, Murray Traditional Middle School, Murray Independent Schools

Annie Yeung, Joshua Hyatt, Jessica Darnell, Murray Traditional Middle School, Murray Independent Schools

Much of the planning among teachers at the same grade level focuses on individual students and how they are doing. Students needing extra help are identified regularly and assigned to after-school Extended School Services classes.

Teaching styles are changing too. Brown sees a lot more hands-on activities in classrooms, and less lecturing. Technology is becoming a part of classroom routines.

Greg Gierhart, a fifth-year math teacher, has embraced many of the new techniques. His students have a choice of working alone or in pairs in the classroom. They use graphing calculators to speed computations. He integrates algebra, geometry and statistics, teaching aspects of all three at once. He uses open-response questions weekly to get students to write about math and explain their answers. Students also make PowerPoint presentations on computers in the classroom. He and the social studies teacher are planning a thematic unit around the ancient world; for that, his math students will make a Chinese abacus. To help parents understand the new approaches to math, each week students are assigned to explain a problem they have solved to their parents. But despite all the new approaches, his students are still expected to have memorized the multiplication tables.

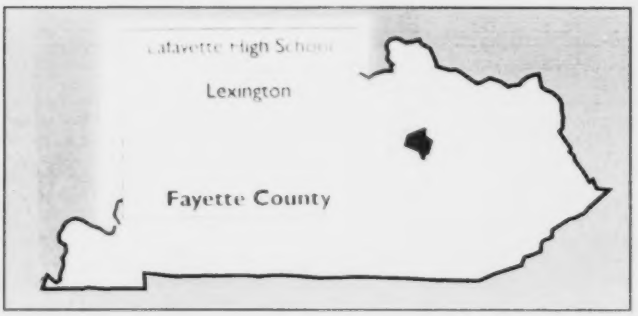
The tradition of high standards and high expectations also lives on at Murray Middle. "I never accept that my students can't do anything," Gierhart said. "It may just take some of them longer."

Lafayette High School Fayette County

College pennants like carrots on sticks ➤ school-based council comes through in the clutch ➤ Mrs. Foose's three-in-one assignment ➤ a mock congress is mostly decorous ➤ "And we're just getting started"

As Fayette County's oldest high school — the original part of the building was completed in 1939 by the WPA (Works Progress Administration) — Lafayette High has 60 years of tradition, largely a tradition of excellence, in athletics and academics. Championship trophies grace its display cases, and history teacher Michael Fogos decorates his classroom with pennants former students have sent from the colleges they are attending. The pennants represent a who's who of elite national colleges and universities. Literally and figuratively, he is dangling higher education in front of his current high school students.

Tradition discourages change, as did Fayette County's strong tradition of central office decision making. But change — a central force of reform — is coming to Lafayette.



To Roxanne Foose, a 16-year teacher at Lafayette, the most significant part of Kentucky's reform is School-Based Decision Making. For her first decade of teaching at Lafayette, everything important was de-cided at the central office — who the next principal would be, what textbooks she would use, which teachers were hired, how many aides the cafeteria would have.

Four years ago, when she was a member of the school council, the council had an opportunity to hire a new principal. "We did surveys among parents and the faculty. We wanted a principal with integrity who was a strong instructional leader. And we could go outside the system."

They hired Mike McKenzie as principal, and with the council and the community he began to make changes at Lafayette.

Two cafeteria aide positions were converted into a teacher position. McKenzie now does lunchroom duty himself, mingling daily with the schools' 1,600 students.

Teachers work together at the school to select textbooks, and they have a role in recommending new faculty members.

But other changes are coming too. The school, which initially focused on writing in all classes in the early days of reform, has now added reading to its school-wide focus. Reading is emphasized in every class — math, science, social studies. At monthly faculty meetings, a reading specialist presents short lessons on techniques for introducing reading in all classes.

At departmental meetings, the focus has shifted to who is teaching what in the state core content. The idea is to make sure everything is covered.

On a snowy day in January 2000, students in Mrs. Foose's senior English class were preparing to write a research paper based on a book about Frankenstein. *Frankenstein* was a reaction to the scientific discoveries of the time in which it was written — an imaginative extrapolation of the consequences that the new science could inflict. The assignment was to write in the same vein about the scientific discoveries of today and their potential consequences for humans. The vocabulary list for the assignment included terms such as cloning, eugenics and cryogenic freezing. The assignment spanned literature, social studies and science.

On the same day, Robin Reid's freshman social studies class was the "Senate" in the Lafayette High School Mock Congress. Students played all the parts of the real Congress and abided by the rules of Congressional debate, including not speaking until you're recognized and being civil.

The "Senate" was considering bills passed by the "House," another freshman social studies class. Bills concerned smoking in restaurants, wearing motorcycle helmets and other issues. The discussion was lively. But decorous, for the most part. Only a couple of times did they all try to speak at once.

Shea Douglas, Lafayette High School, Fayette County Schools

At one point, a student called a proposal "stupid." He was admonished by Mrs. Reid. Call it "ill-advised" or "misinformed," she advised. The next time a "stupid" bill came up, the student rose to speak again. "This bill is," he said, pausing to look at Mrs. Reid — "what was one of those words you used?" "Ill-advised." "Yes, this bill is ill-advised," he said.

After class, she said, "They've come a long way this year."

These are examples of what Principal McKenzie sees as a shift in teaching, a lot more active learning, a lot less "sit and get."

Lafayette — like many urban high schools in older neighborhoods — serves a diverse student body — students from some of the most educated families in Fayette County to some of the least educated. As a school with proud traditions, it is changing carefully.

The results are solid. In 1999, Lafayette students exceeded 80 in three core content areas and ranked among the top dozen high schools in the state overall.

"And we are just getting started," McKenzie said.

Ludlow High SchoolLudlow Independent

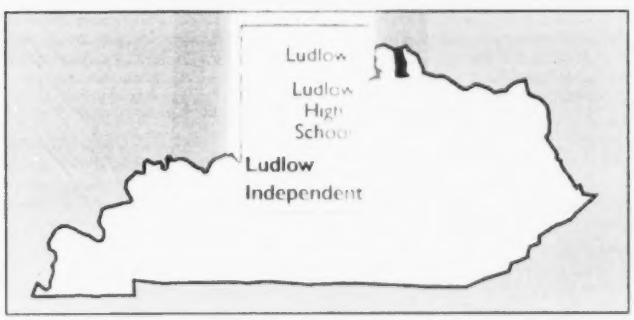
Financial equity ➤ a total buy-in ➤ the power of "PD" ➤ grads at NKU erupt in celebration ➤ a Holiday Hop, a pig roast and Chaucer re-enacted ➤ a leader of reform

Ludlow is an aging blue-collar residential suburb west of Covington. Neatly sandwiched between the Ohio River and the high bluffs to the south, its small lots, small houses, corner drug stores and occasional corner tavern bespeak the 1920s, when it was a thriving railroad center.

By the 1980s, though, Ludlow's tax base made it one of the poorest districts in Kentucky, and it was one of the 66 districts that joined in the lawsuit challenging the constitutionality of the state school finance system.

In the first four years of reform, Ludlow's per-pupil revenue jumped from less than $3,000 to nearly $4,500. It went from being one of northern Kentucky's least funded districts to equity. Reform gave Ludlow the resources for Ludlow to do what other districts had been doing all along, noted Barbara Martin, a veteran teacher and administrator in the district.

But there was much more to Ludlow's transformation than money. Martin will never forget what Jon Draud, the superintendent in 1990, now a state representative, and Elizabeth Grause, an assistant superintendent in 1990, now the superintendent, told the faculty in their first meeting about the new reform law.



"They said you can't pick and choose parts of the reform; you have to buy in totally," Martin said.

And Ludlow did.

Teachers went to all the state professional development training sessions. They got grants for training teachers in new ways to teach writing and math. They put to work the new state funds for Extended School Services. After-school tutoring is routine now.

Among other things, new state technology money allowed the math department to buy graphing calculators for all students. "We're a few years ahead," said math teacher Tom Stull. "We can teach more because the calculators are faster." Instead of watching students slog through complex computations with pencil and paper, Stull can focus on helping students understand concepts, applications and relationships between math, science and vocations.

The arts became much more important in the school, says veteran art teacher Tammy Smith. Art is now widely perceived as content, not play, and the school has the resources to take students to art performances and to bring artists and performances into the school regularly.

Since writing was emphasized on the new state tests, all teachers were trained in writing techniques and all teachers participated in the scoring of writing portfolios. All students keep writing portfolios every year, not just in the state-required accountability years. Teachers use open-response questions – the kind that dominate the state tests – routinely in all classes.

Very early they realigned the curriculum to ensure that everything likely to be on state tests (namely, the academic Core Content for Assessment) was being taught by somebody in the school. Teachers have a daily, common planning period that allows them to work together effectively.

"We didn't want our kids to go into the test handicapped," Martin said. "It's not just the school being successful; it's the kids being successful."

With many students being the second and third generation of their families to attend Ludlow, the faculty worked hard to instill school pride in the students as a way of motivating them to do well. One year, when the test scores put Ludlow among the elite in the region, Ludlow graduates attending Northern Kentucky University had an impromptu celebration in the NKU student center, much to the puzzlement of other students.

Even though it's a tight knit community, the district recently made parent involvement a priority. Every school has a parent coordinator. At the high school, this new focus has led to a parent-student-faculty Holiday Hop and a pre-football game "Pig Roast" that featured teachers and staff serving food to parents and students.

Teaching has changed too.

While Smith used to teach students about specific pieces of great art, now she focuses on the techniques of evaluating any piece of art. Now, whatever work of art may appear on the state tests, her students are equipped to explain it "even if they have never seen it before."

Before Martin made the switch from classroom to administration, "I began to let the kids discover the content." In one memorable exercise, all 65 of her seniors re-enacted Chaucer's pilgrimage. In full period costumes they'd made themselves, the class made a two-mile trek into Covington, telling tales to strangers all along the way. Those students still talk to her about it, she says.

Stull said teachers are more attuned to learning, not just teaching. Where once they may have taught it, tested it and moved on, now they ask: "Is this effective? If not, how do you make it effective?"

Whatever the combination of factors – resources, leadership, commitment, planning, pride – Ludlow High School has flourished over the last decade. It has a very strong writing score plus solid across-the-board performance on the core content tests, making it one of the top 20 high schools in the state.

Kaleb Miller, Ludlow High School, Kenton County Schools

Pikeville High School Pikeville Independent

Darn the baseline, full speed ahead ➤ bearing down on 100 ➤ wanting to be the best ➤ no taxation without advance communication ➤ parents push, teachers push, students respond

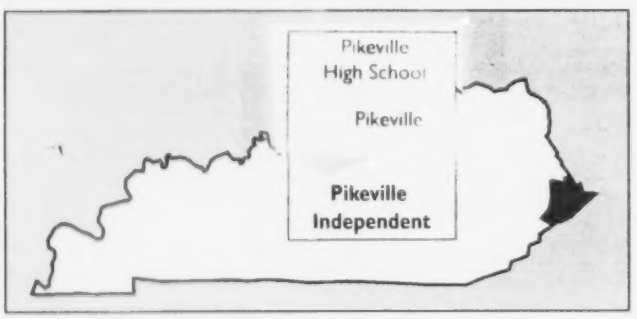
Social studies teacher Ernie Johnson came to Pikeville High School as a teacher in 1990 just as schools were trying to figure out reform. The Pikeville faculty viewed reform as a challenge, and one they would meet, beginning right away.

He remembers the district's administrators encouraging the faculty to "take risks."

Before the first state tests in 1992, the Pikeville faculty devised its own performance events – a new type of testing technique used in the early days of reform – so the students could become familiar with them. As it turned out, Pikeville's own performance events were tougher than the state's.

The school also encouraged students to do well on the first state tests, even though doing well the first year in the state's accountability system would set a high bar for its baseline, and make it harder for Pikeville to earn rewards later by demonstrating improvement.

Pikeville students did do well that first year, and they have continued to do well, finishing among the state's top 10 high schools on the 1999 Kentucky Core Content Tests. Their overall score of 76 has them bearing down, already, on the state goal of 100 by 2014.



Teachers and administrators cite several reasons for their success. Even though it's in Appalachia, a region that lacks many of the advantages that tend to predict academic prowess, Pikeville has had a long tradition of wanting to be the best at whatever it does. The school district's constituency, predominantly professionals, have long supported the schools with one of the state's highest local tax efforts, and it pays its teachers more than any other district in the state. Its commons area sports a wall of fame honoring successful graduates, and huge photographs of its state athletic and academic championship teams.

"Our parents are pushing all the time," principal Bud Shely said.

The faculty pushes students too. "If we up our expectations, our kids will usually get there," Johnson said. "If we expect them to perform well on a test, they will respond."

The school is also competitive. Within hours of state test score releases, Shely said, "Every teacher in the building knows where we ranked."

Pikeville has also made a lot of changes in what it does and how. It looked at the state learning goals and increased its graduation requirements. It changed from the traditional six-period day to 90-minute block scheduling. It has tried various approaches to professional development, but all of them have been focused on content and delivery. It realigned the curriculum across the district. In doing so, it discovered that some areas were being taught several times while others were omitted.

"We've done something every year to focus on expectations and core content," Shely said.

The school has also shifted its teaching tactics. Recently, a biology class was flying paper airplanes in the commons area. But they weren't goofing off. The students were designing different kinds of airplanes to study how different species of birds have developed wings suitable for different environments.

Another time, Shely got calls from concerned parents one night. So did the superintendent. They were surprised to learn that a history teacher had charged students 10 cents per page for a test on the American Revolution that day. It was either pay up or flunk. The students all paid, and of course they got their money back the next day. It turned out that this was just the teacher's way of driving home the principle of "no taxation without representation," in a way that a textbook or a lecture alone never could.

Pikeville's focus on success, its top-notch teachers and their ability to adapt has Johnson confident about Pikeville's future in the state accountability system. "I think we'll get to 100; we just have some tinkering to do."

Evelyn Johnson, Pikeville High School, Pikeville Independent Schools

Different kinds of schools with different kinds of students get similar good results

Leadership ➤ teamwork ➤ high standards for every child ➤ a work ethic ➤ a positive attitude ➤ an intense focus on results

The schools described above vary greatly in geography and demography. Yet, they all have outstanding scores on state core content tests. These very different schools get similar results from very different kinds of students.

They also have other common characteristics:

- Strong leaders. Principals and teachers who are intensely focused on teaching core content effectively.
- Teamwork. People in these schools work together as teams on everything. They plan as teams, they make schoolwide (and sometimes district-wide) decisions as teams, they teach in teams. They have vertical teams and horizontal teams. There is a lot of consultation, give and take and sharing. They share materials and ideas, power and responsibility.
- High standards and expectations for every child. They accept no excuses and cut little slack. High achievement is expected. "Apprentice work is not acceptable," said a teacher in a rural middle school.
- A work ethic. It is what one principal called the "shoe leather" method. Teachers and staff are committed to getting the job done. Student homework – "correctly done," as one teacher added – is emphasized.
- Risk taking. They are not afraid to try new things. Or to abandon them when they fail.
- Attention to detail. Whether it is the attendance rate, scuffmarks on the floor, or undone homework, the people in these schools are on top of it quickly. They are quick to identify students who need extra help and to provide it right away.
- Positivism. To hear them tell it, all these schools have great teachers, good kids and supportive parents. Objectively, those claims are hard to prove. But the positive attitude about colleagues, students and community is unmistakable.
- Competitiveness. Yes, they are competitive – in academics, athletics and other extracurricular activities. They want to be the best, and they want their students to be the best. They set goals, and they work constantly on their weaknesses.

Keith Blackburn, Leoandria Kelley, Eminence Independent Schools

The various pieces of reform have had varied impacts on these schools. Some benefited significantly from the equity provisions of the new school finance formula; others did not. Some have family resource or youth services centers; others don't. Technology has been deployed at varying rates within these schools, and how it is used within schools differs significantly from one to the other. Professional development strategies varied, but in one way or another all the schools used the new monies to focus on achieving academic goals. Nearly all praised Extended School Services, the program that provides struggling students with extra help, as an important factor in their success.

What sets these schools apart is their intense focus on results. Everything else flows from that. Once they decide what they want their results to be, they go to work as teams figuring out how to get those results. And that's where all the variations in approach come in.

Lin Whitley, Dominique Stewart, Lafayette High School, Fayette County Schools

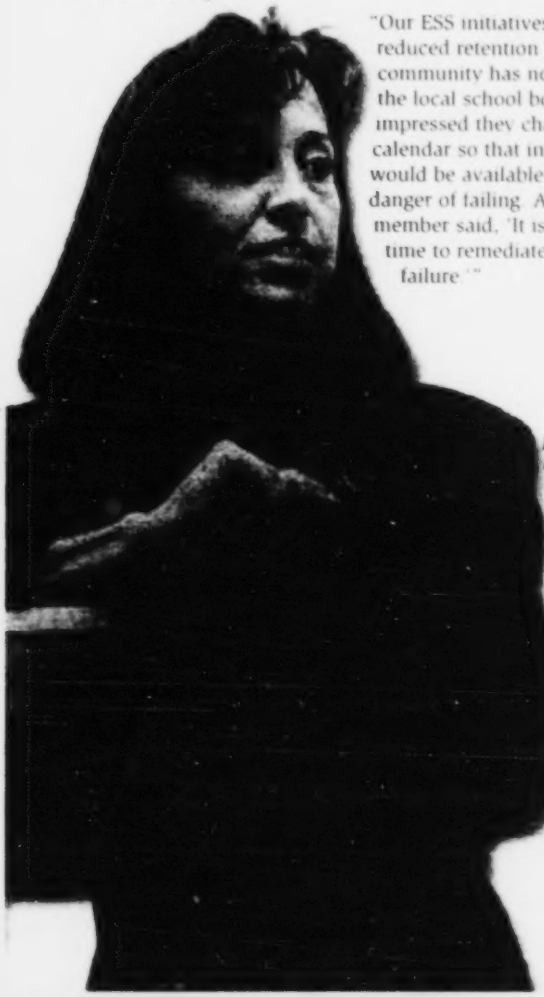
"Our ESS initiatives have greatly reduced retention rates, and our community has noticed"

"The remediation programs of 15 years ago were ineffective for students and frustrating for teachers. Each teacher had 20 to 30 students from two grade levels and all content areas to tutor each afternoon. We could not meet individual needs, not academically and not financially. Reform has resulted in many accomplishments and success stories for ESS.

"We immediately hired more teachers, lowering the ratio of students to teachers to eight-to-one, and began a mentoring program. Peer tutors, cross-aged tutors (high school students), community mentors and 'Big Brothers, Big Sisters' programs fell in line with the emphasis on cooperative learning. An hour a week of undivided attention succeeds at remediation and enhances growth, confidence and understanding.

"We have science, math, computer and writing portfolio workshops and manipulatives that make learning fun. We provide incentives for academic achievement. We hold afternoon sessions for work on open-response questions for all content areas. In 1998 we started Saturday School for those students who could not attend after-school tutoring.

"Our ESS initiatives have greatly reduced retention rates, and our community has noticed. In fact, the local school board was so impressed they changed the school calendar so that intersessions would be available for students in danger of failing. As one board member said, 'It is obvious that the time to remediate is before failure.'"



Pamela Miller has been teaching in Grayson County for 20 years. Currently she is ESS coordinator at Grayson County Middle School where she teaches 8th grade American History. Miller also is the supervisor for Grayson County's Partners in Education program.

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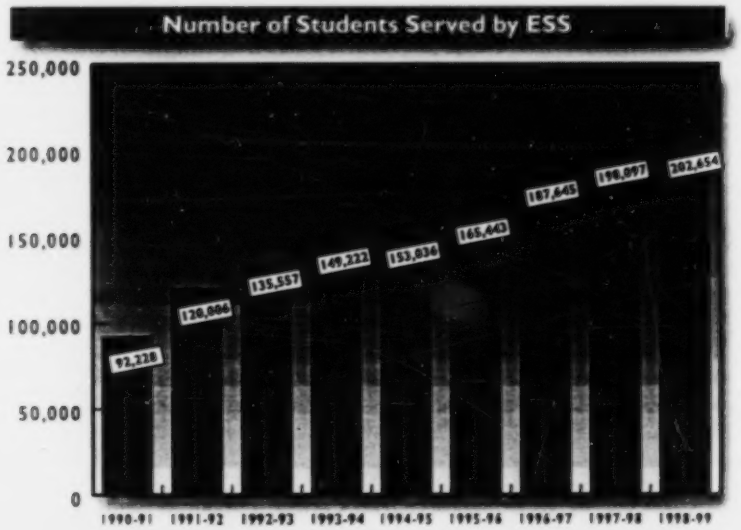
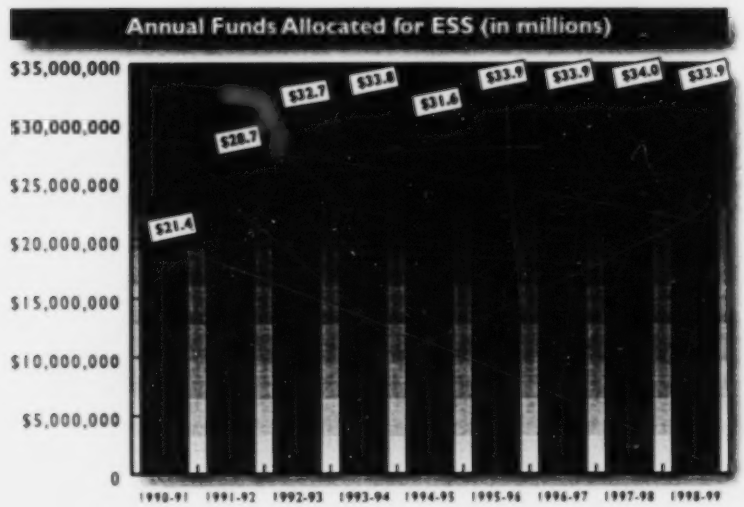
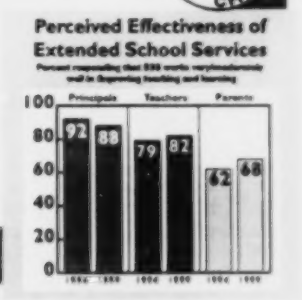
Extended School Services

Extended School Services (ESS) is a program that provides support for students who need extra help or time to achieve academic success. In Kentucky's program, special sessions are scheduled outside the regular school day to help these students. Whether the session is before or after school, on weekends or during the summer, students now get long-term support in those academic areas in which they may be having difficulty. ESS is not a homework session. It is a specially designed program to help each student according to his or her individual needs.







"I am amazed by the response of parents to our family resource center"

"Before the Kentucky Education Reform Act, there often was no connection between a school and its community. Services were fragmented at best, and the needs of many children and families were not identified or met. Family resource and youth services centers fill this gap by addressing issues concerning children, parents and families — issues that affect students' health, well-being and ability to learn.

"The Richmond Family Resource Center emphasizes Parent and Child Education (PACE) and health services. PACE helps parents work toward completing the GED, develop and improve their work skills, strengthen their role as parents, and become more involved in the development and education of their children. Physical and emotional health services at the school result in students spending less time out of the classroom because of illness or visits to the doctor.

"I am amazed by the response of parents to our family resource center. Parents often share information with center staff that they do not share with teachers. Many times we can help them address concerns before they have a negative impact on the child in the classroom.

"Others in the community get more involved, too. Each center must have an advisory council comprised of school personnel, community representatives and parents. All of these parties come into the schools to discuss and address issues together."

Tamara Gay is a veteran coordinator of the Richmond Family Resource Center and is president of the Family Resource Youth Services Coalition of Kentucky, Inc.

Family Resource/Youth Services Centers

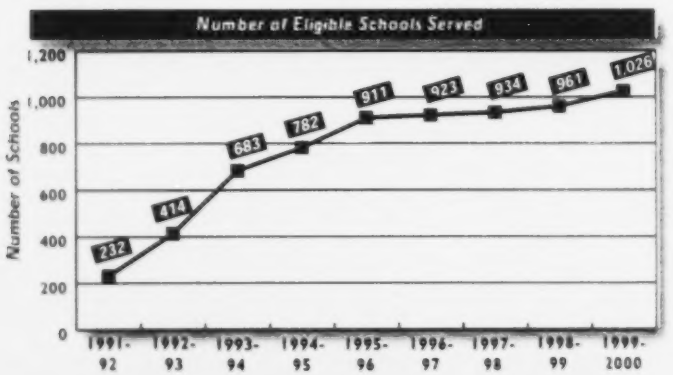
The Family Resource & Youth Services Centers program mission is to enhance students' abilities to succeed in school by developing and sustaining partnerships that promote early learning and successful transition into school, academic achievement and well-being, and graduation and transition into adult life. Centers are designed to promote the flow of resources and provide support to families in ways that strengthen the functioning, growth and development of the individual members and the family unit. Each center addresses components required by law and optional components as determined by ongoing needs assessments.

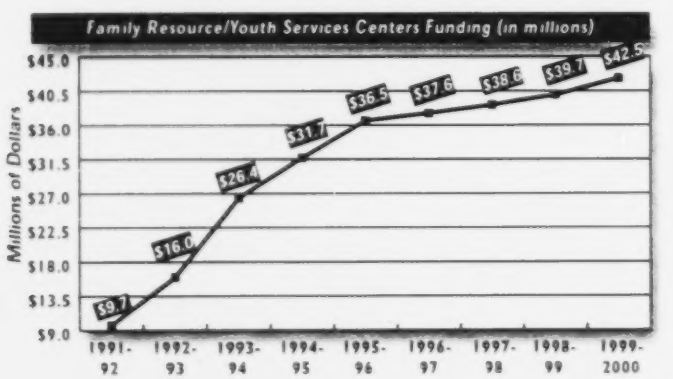
Family Resource Centers address:

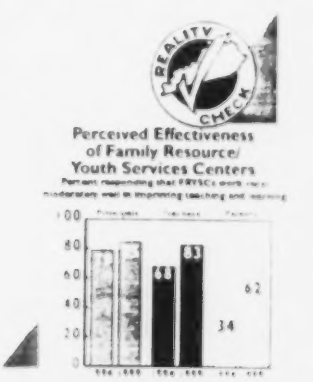
- Full-time preschool child care for children 2 and 3 years of age,
- After school child care for all children ages 4 through 12, with the child care being full-time during the summer and on other days when school is not in session;
- Families in Training, an integrated approach to home visits, group meeting and monitoring child development for new and expectant parents;
- Parent and Child Education (PACE). If there is no PACE program, the center must ensure that undereducated parents and preschool children will have the opportunity to participate in programs that integrate adult education, parenting skills and child development;
- Support and training for child day care providers; and,
- Health services and/or referral to health services.

Youth Services Centers address:

- Referrals to health and social services,
- Employment counseling, training and placement;
- Summer and part-time job development,
- Drug and alcohol abuse counseling; and
- Family crisis and mental health counseling.







"The new... system recognizes that all students deserve the same opportunities..."

"Facilities and transportation were the first issues that caused me to question the equity of the state's system of school finance. We had no money to improve old buildings — some built in the '30s by WPA — and no way to generate money. We had to buy used buses from other districts.

"We also lacked the money to offer our students the courses the wealthier districts offered. I knew our students could compete academically with any in the state, and it didn't seem fair that their education should depend on the wealth of the community.

"The new education funding system recognizes that all students deserve the same opportunities to learn and achieve. After 10 years, I see tremendous gains in our district. We have new buildings. We can buy new, safe buses. We have more science and mathematics teachers and teacher aides. For the first time, we have counselors for our elementary students. We're offering foreign languages in our high school, and the new Kentucky Virtual High School will help us expand on that. We plan to do more with the performing arts. Every student has access to e-mail and the Internet. Our students consider careers they wouldn't have thought of before.

"The school finance system is vastly better, but not all of the funding problems are fixed. If equity is to continue and improve, we have to be diligent that all districts have the mechanism to receive or generate the funding they need to provide the education all students deserve."

Eugene Brown, superintendent of Fayette County Schools, was vice president of the Council for Better Education, the body that in 1989 filed the lawsuit challenging the equity and adequacy of funds provided for education. The council was a nonprofit corporation of 66 school districts, their boards of education and 22 students from the districts represented by those boards.

Financial Equity

The Kentucky General Assembly included in the Reform Act a new funding system to address the inequities inherent in the previous system. The philosophical bases of the new approach were that it should:

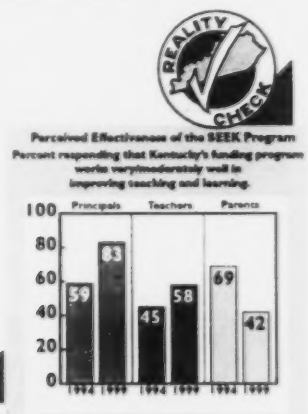
1. set a target revenue for every school district that would reflect each district's needs,
2. determine state aid as the difference between each district's target revenue level and the revenue that would be produced by a uniform property tax levy,
3. permit districts to exceed the target revenue level, based on decisions of local school boards and local voters, and provide equalized state aid,
4. raise the effort of low-wealth districts,
5. limit a district's ability to generate revenue too far above the amounts raised in other districts,
6. provide equalized state support for facilities,
7. provide support for certain programs outside of the basic education program, and
8. provide fiscal incentives to districts to improve pupil performance.

Under the old funding system, the state provided funds to local districts based on the resources schools were thought to need, including personnel, and districts were monitored to ensure that funds were spent for the purposes for which they were intended. There was no accountability for pupil performance.

The new approach is based on the premise that school districts, and schools, best know how to organize their resources to promote pupil achievement and that the state's role is to establish performance objectives, to provide adequate funding, and to hold districts accountable for performance. Under this approach, districts spend their funds in the ways they determine will best help them meet performance objectives.

The "Funding Gap" has narrowed by 36.9%

	1989-90	1998-99
Low-wealth districts	$4,386	$7,388
High-wealth districts	$3,187	$6,631
GAP	**$1,199**	**$757**



Source: Kentucky Institute for Education Research, Nov. 99

"Students are much better prepared to begin the learning process"

"The early primary teachers I work with comment all the time about how much better prepared students are coming to them than they were before reform. They're more familiar with the building and surroundings, and they've been exposed to many learning experiences.

"One of the main benefits of the Preschool Program is that if a child has a problem or learning disability we can work on that during preschool. For example, we had a child this year whose doctor's office contacted us and asked that we make a home contact. The child was being raised by his grandparents. They were very reluctant to see me. He was three and still crawling. After we contacted them and made a home visit, they were encouraged and sent him to preschool. They are so pleased because they've noticed a difference in their grandson. He is much more verbal, more mobile, and they're amazed at the progress he's made in the last three months.

"Those same experiences happen all the time. People don't think three-year-olds can make that much progress, but they do. The kids who go through preschool today are kids who 10 or 12 years ago would not have been successful.

"The greatest impact has been on student achievement. Students are much better prepared to begin the learning process as they go into kindergarten. We're not spending that kindergarten year on socialization and those beginning skills. When they enter kindergarten they're much better prepared for the learning process. And in a rural setting, many of our children are very isolated. We feel like preschool has provided the socialization they need."

Jo Glover is the elementary instructional supervisor for the Tedd County Board of Education. She is a veteran educator with 10 years of experience in kindergarten classrooms and six years of administrative experience, all in Tedd County.

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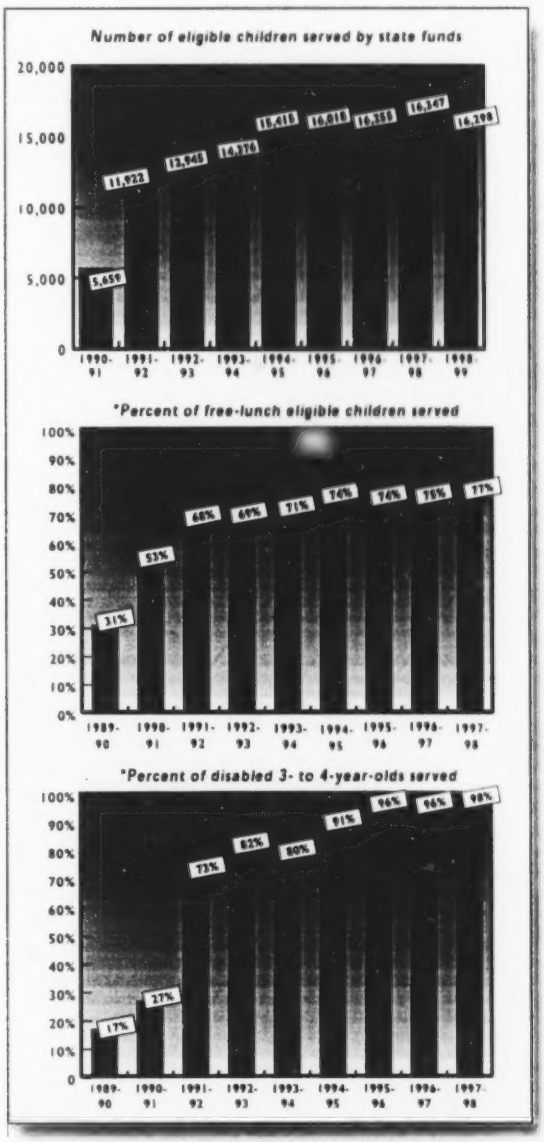
Preschool

Kentucky's Preschool Program works collaboratively with Head Start and other programs to serve 4-year-old children whose economic standing places them at-risk, and 3- and 4-year-old children with significant delays and disabilities. Besides the enriching educational activities in a good preschool classroom, Kentucky also provides parent education programs, health and developmental screening, immunizations, nutrition, and social services for the participating children and their families. All of these features are designed to work together to help children enter primary school ready to succeed.

Researchers have found that the program is working. The University of Kentucky reports that program participants make significant progress in their overall development, social skills and early literacy. Most noteworthy, according to the UK researchers, is that the program produces similar positive results for all groups of children, regardless of their race or gender. Longitudinal studies show that at-risk 7- and 8-year-olds who participated in the Preschool Program did as well in school as other children their age who were not considered at-risk.



*Includes federally funded children (Head Start)

"Kentucky's Primary Program has changed the way teachers are expected to teach. We have become orchestraters and facilitators, and young children are given the opportunity to make the connections that so enhance learning.

"Today, the children in my classroom learn from 'real' books, and I no longer sit at a table hearing 'Boo Bear' stories over and over again and handing out learning packets with little consideration for the developmental levels of my students. My students learn to read, write and spell by reading, writing and spelling. They solve real-life math problems, and their curriculum is integrated. They are immersed in 'natural' language learning at their own pace.

"As a teacher, I spend much more time planning and preparing lessons, as well as writing, aligning and integrating the curriculum. Before reform, the textbook companies did this.

"I knew we were on the right track the day one of my first-graders used tiles to determine the square root of 81. The Primary Program is about understanding and applying concepts, not just memorizing them. It is about connecting learning to the real world. It is beginning instruction at each child's level of development. The Primary Program 'forced' teachers to individualize instruction. The result has been higher achievement as well as greater student self-confidence.

"I work much harder than I did before KERA, but I am having fun teaching, and my children are having fun learning."

"The result has been higher achievement as well as greater student self-confidence"

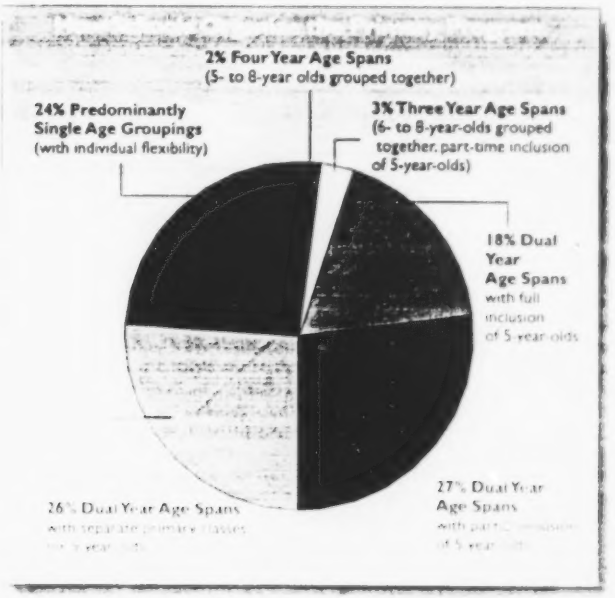
Nancy Schulten has been a primary teacher at Natcher Elementary in Warren County since 1986. She holds bachelor's and master's degrees from Western Kentucky University and has completed the Western Kentucky University writing and reading projects. She currently chairs the advisory board of the WKU Writing Project.

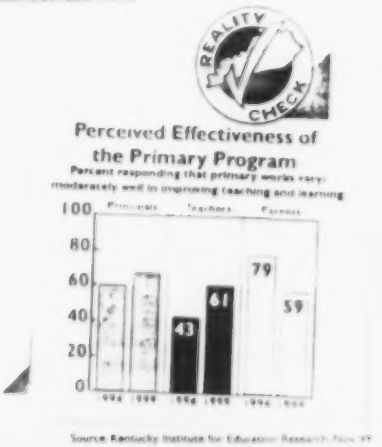
Primary

Kentucky's Primary Program recognizes that children develop at different rates, with different needs and with different learning styles. This continuous learning is framed around seven attributes or principles that contribute to student achievement. Schools have flexibility in structuring their Primary Program to incorporate these attributes:

- Developmentally appropriate practices: Teaching children based on their individual readiness for the content, skill or instructional approach being used.
- Continuous progress: The expectation that each child will progress through primary school at his or her own pace, and the recognition that every child learns at a different rate.
- Authentic assessment: The ongoing documentation of what students learn and do in their classroom each day.
- Qualitative reporting: Communicating the child's progress to the child and his or her family in a manner that focuses on the growth and development of the child.
- Professional teamwork: All school staff working together regularly to plan and teach.
- Positive parent involvement: Schools actively seeking to increase the participation of parents in supporting their child's learning.
- Multi-age/Multi-ability: Flexibly grouping students based on individual student needs, rather than solely by age.

The chart below shows how schools are using a variety of flexible grouping patterns to meet student needs.


2% Four Year Age Spans
(5- to 8-year olds grouped together)
24% Predominantly Single Age Groupings
(with individual flexibility)
3% Three Year Age Spans
(5- to 8-year-olds grouped together, part-time inclusion of 5-year-olds)
18% Dual Year Age Spans
with full inclusion of 5-year-olds
26% Dual Year Age Spans
27% Dual Year Age Spans



"...new, exciting ways to stimulate learning..."

"I used to feel resentful that I had to take time from my classes to attend an in-service that I did not consider helpful. Teachers rarely, if ever, had input about the topics. Much of the instruction was theoretical and often had no application to what I was teaching.

"In the past 10 years, Professional Development has undergone innumerable changes for the better. Activities early in reform concentrated on change and expectations. As we became more knowledgeable about reform efforts, focus turned to the classroom.

"The sessions were not lectures but involved group assignments and exchange of ideas that translated into activities for my students. I learned better ways to involve my students and their parents in the learning process.

"Now, sessions are often planned by the teachers, for the teachers. Content is geared toward student achievement. I am exposed to new, exciting ways to stimulate learning in my classroom.

"And it's working! Test scores have improved. Student writing portfolios have improved. We keep up with changing technology.

"I hope that, in next few years, we will be able to extend our vision of professional development even further -- to leave our own 'back yards' and move beyond the needs of today to the needs of tomorrow."

Maureen Motsinger was the 1999 recipient of the A.D. Albright Teaching Leadership Award. She was also recipient of the 1995 Ashland Teacher Achievement Award and a 1996 scholarship from the American Association of Teachers of French to study in Lyon, France. Motsinger is in her 14th year of teaching French at Scott High School in Kenton County.

Professional Development

Kentucky's legislators knew that if they were to achieve their goal of producing significant positive learning results for all students, they needed to provide a professional development system focused on improving the skills of teachers and other educators.

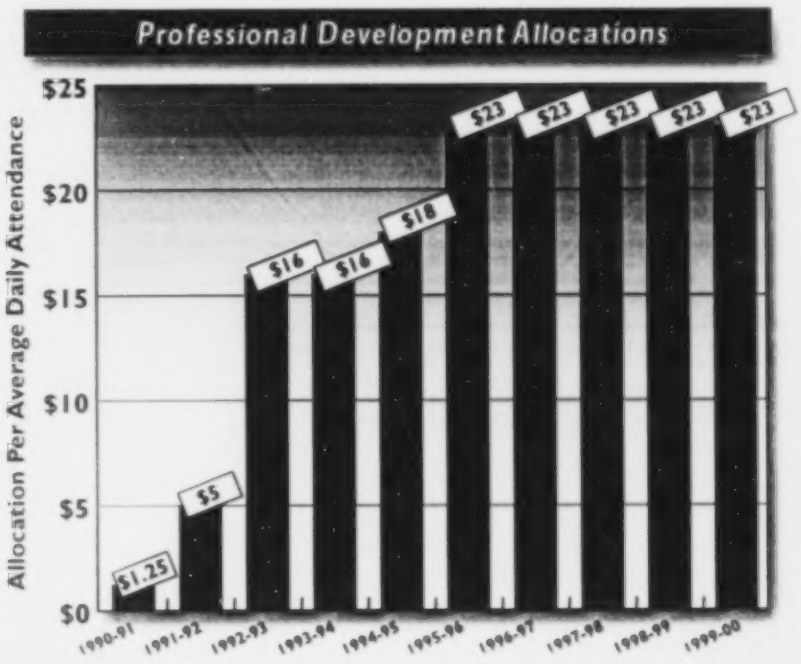
Consequently, they included in the Reform Act several important provisions to improve the expertise of the state's educators. These included:

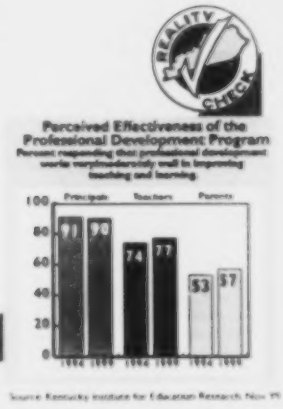
- A line item appropriation in the state budget;
- Four days of professional development annually;
- Leadership development programs and district professional development plans supporting school needs; and
- A requirement that at least 65 percent of state professional development funds be spent at the local school level, empowering schools and school councils to develop and approve professional development plans to meet their needs.

Throughout Kentucky, professional development is now seen as a critical part of academic improvement:

- Schools that have reached the highest level of rewards in all three assessment cycles cite professional development as a major factor in their success.
- In the majority of schools across Kentucky, professional development has been incorporated within school functions, emerging from the shared concerns of school staff to improve learning opportunities for children.
- Local schools and districts are building their capacity to nurture their own instructional change efforts.
- Collaboration between KDE and the Education Professional Standards Board has resulted in more opportunities for teachers to achieve advanced degrees and pay status through their participation in professional development.

In sum, education reform has resulted in a specific focus for professional development as teachers learn new programs, practices and procedures.





"Increased communication has resulted in both parents and community members being more informed and involved in activities"

"Before the implementation of School-Based Decision Making councils, it seemed that as children progressed through grade levels parents became less involved. Elementary schools always seemed to welcome parent participation, but in the upper grades parent involvement seemed less welcome. They weren't very well informed about school activities, policy, curriculum or, when first implemented, testing. Students also had no voice in decisionmaking. Schools were one-dimensional in their perspective.

"Today, parents who want to be informed and involved in their child's education can run for a seat on the school council. Those not comfortable with serving are becoming more comfortable with the council process. As they see positive changes enacted and concerns addressed, their attendance and involvement at council meetings is increasing.

"The greatest impact that the school-based council has had on our school community has resulted from committee work. The hours that committee members spend weighing all aspects of issues result in good recommendations to the council. Members of the student council are encouraged to participate in committee work, giving them a greater voice in decisions that affect them.

"Increased communication has resulted in both parents and community members being more informed and involved in activities. This factor, alone, has resulted in our being able to meet many of the needs of both individual students and groups.

"Reform has given us all a greater perspective on issues and how they might be resolved. Our schools are enriched and our children are achieving greater success, academically and socially."

Marsha Segebarth is currently serving a second term on the Madisonville North Hopkins High School Curriculum Committee, and is a former member of the James Madison Middle School SBDM council. She is the mother of six children, two of whom still attend Madisonville North Hopkins High.

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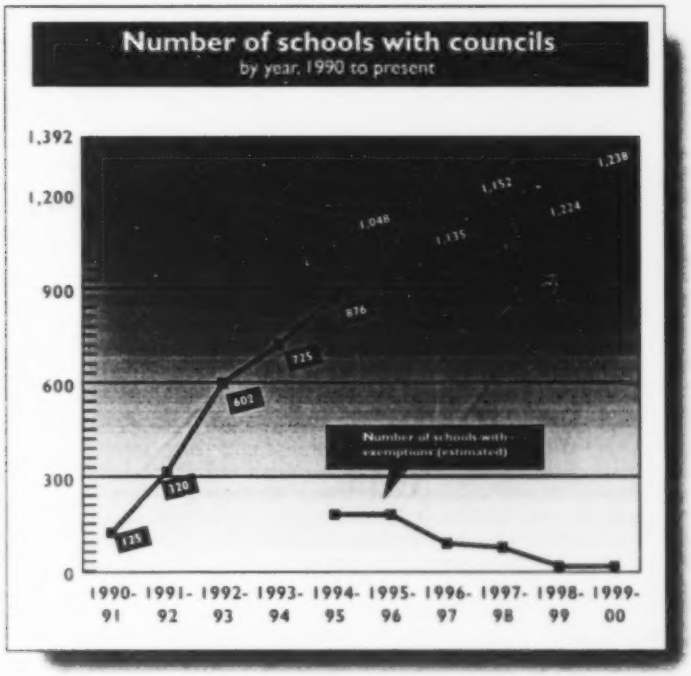
School-Based Decision Making

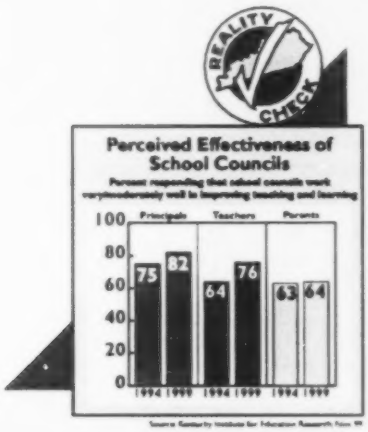
The School-Based Decision Making initiative puts responsibility for making decisions in the hands of those most affected by them - principals, teachers and parents. While local school boards are still responsible for setting overall district policies, school councils empower parents, teachers and principals in a school to make the decisions about what happens in their school building.

Making these key players the decision makers ensures that their interests and concerns are considered in the policy-making process. In Kentucky, school councils have authority over each school's budget, staffing assignments, professional development, curriculum, instructional materials and techniques, and other areas. The school council has a unique role and opportunity in affecting the school's learning climate.



The Statewide Numbers

Number of school councils with alternative models - **60**
Estimated number of parent members on councils - **2,800**
Estimated number of teacher members on councils - **4,000**
Estimated number of principal members on councils - **1,250**
Estimated number of additional parents serving on council committees - **15,000**
Estimated number of additional teachers serving on council committees - **25,000**
Estimated number of persons involved directly in SBDM - **48,050**



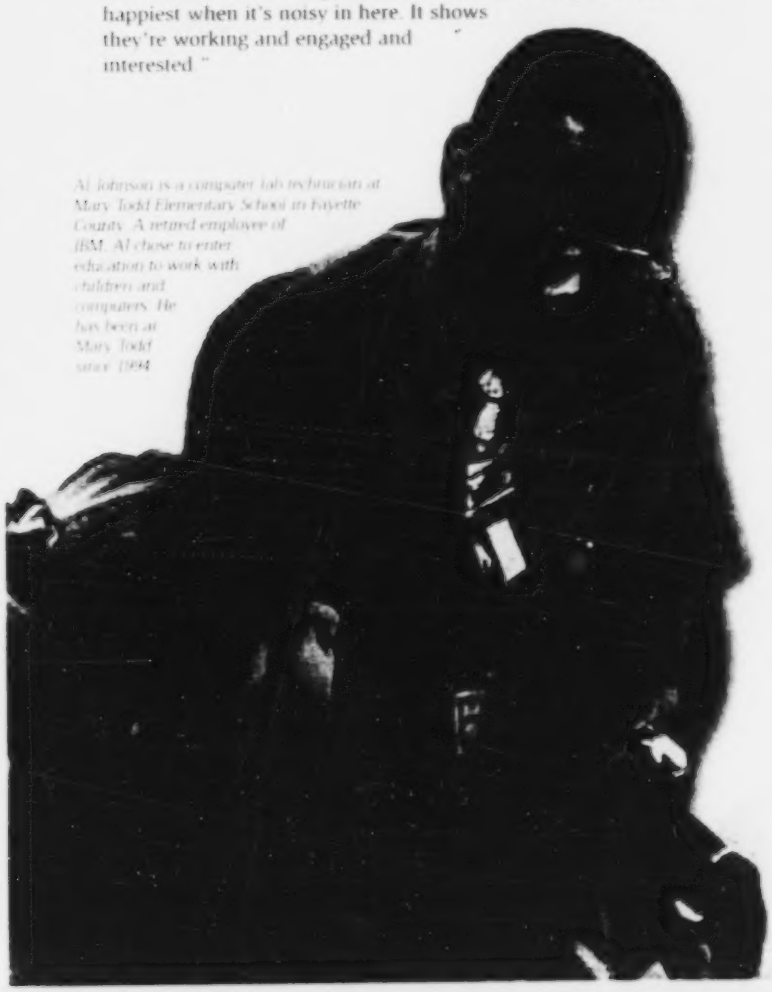
"The impact on the kids is tremendous"

"Technology has made a dramatic impact on students. It makes much of the learning fun for the kids. I see them in the classroom and in the lab when they're working with technology, and the smiles and freedom it brings to the kids is just great to see.

"I'm working with the Student Technology Leadership Program, and because of time constraints this year, I'm bringing some 2nd- through 5th-graders in three mornings a week about a half-hour before school. This morning, I had them reading the newspaper on the Internet.

"The impact on the kids is tremendous. When I realized that I couldn't accommodate enough kids in our after school program, I decided to do something in the morning. I had 72 kids who wanted to come to school early to be part of that! The kids excitement about technology is as great as anything that's in the schools right now. When you can parlay that with learning, you're way ahead of the game.

"The thing that's made me so happy is seeing kids on task and collaborating. And I've had several situations in the lab where I've kind of pushed to let them work together. And what you see developing is they're talking, 'let's do this,' 'let me try this,' 'why don't we do that.' As long as they're on task, I say let them go because they can feed off of one another, and when one kid doesn't know something, another will, or they'll figure it out. I'm happiest when it's noisy in here. It shows they're working and engaged and interested."



Al Johnson is a computer lab technician at Mary Todd Elementary School in Fayette County. A retired employee of IBM, Al chose to enter education to work with children and computers. He has been at Mary Todd since 1994.

Kentucky Education Technology System

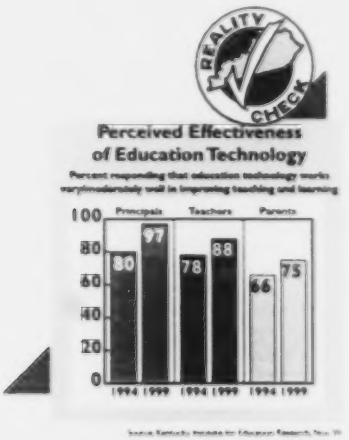
The Kentucky Education Technology System (KETS) is a $600 million program that sends money into every Kentucky school district for technology in classrooms. Each year, districts receive funds by matching them dollar for dollar until the basic technology "toolbox" for every classroom in every school is filled. Kentucky's technology "toolbox" which every school should have, includes:

- telephone access in every classroom;
- video access in every classroom;
- one KETS-standard, networked computer for every teacher, with access to productivity software (word processing, spreadsheets, presentation, database), e-mail, the Internet and other instructional software; and
- one KETS-standard, networked computer per six students, with the same capabilities for teachers.

Providing children with powerful learning technologies helps them compete and achieve academically, become informed and involved citizens, secure good jobs or create their own businesses, and build successful lives in the new information age.

It is worth noting that 95 percent of KETS expenditures support instruction, while just 5 percent support district and school administration. Kentucky is now recognized nationally as a leader in the area of education technology. In fact, technology plays such an important role in Kentucky that a new technology competency standard for both new and experienced teachers is now included in the teacher certification process.

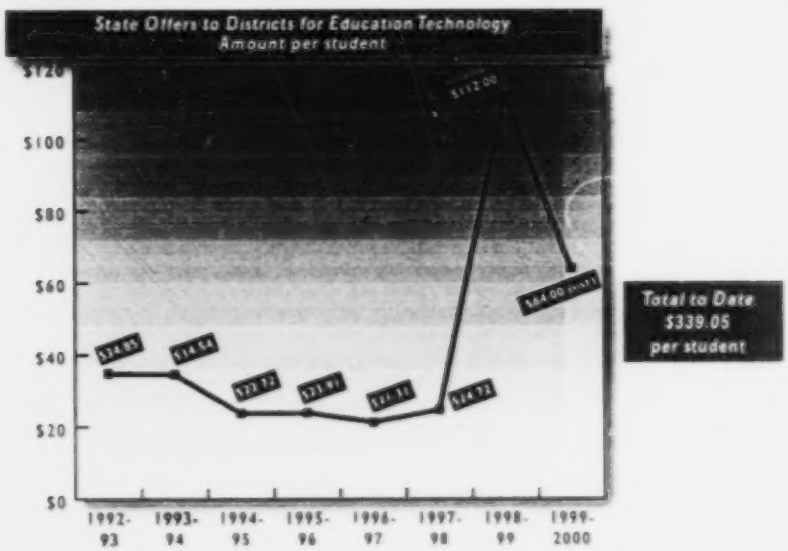
	Status				
	1992	1995	1997	(Current) 1999	Goal
Average ratio of computers to students	1:154	1:12.6	1:8.0	1:6.4	1:6
Average ratio of computers to teachers	1:28.0	1:4.0	1:3.0	1:1.4	1:1
Schools connected directly to KETS network and the Internet via high-speed lines	na	21%	75%	86%	100%
Schools with complete internal building wiring; every classroom linked to Internet	na	25%	55%	83%	100%
Schools using e-mail routinely for instruction and administration	1%	50%	80%	95%	100%

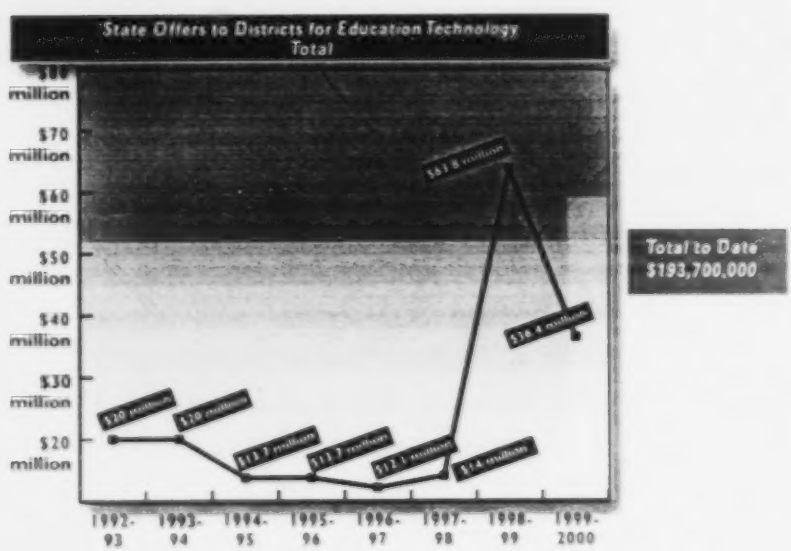


Kentucky Education Technology System

Technology Investment

With the 1998/2000 biennial budget, Kentucky realized full funding of the Master Plan for Education Technology. The total cost of slightly more than $600 million is comprised of state funding ("offers") that is matched by local districts. In addition, some items are totally state-funded while others are totally locally-funded. Most districts invest much more than the required match of one local dollar to one state dollar. In fact, the average district match statewide is almost $2 for every $1 in state funds. In 1998-99, Governor Paul Patton used state budget surplus money to fully fund the KETS Master Plan.



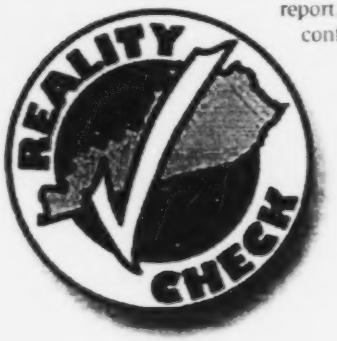


Public Confidence

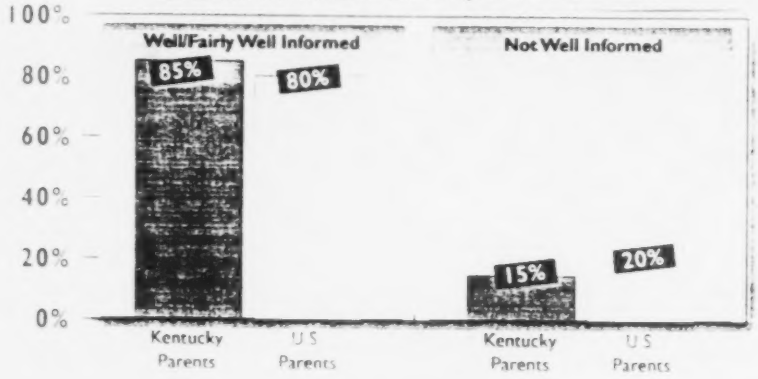
In January 2000 the Phi Delta Kappa/Kentucky Poll asked 800 randomly selected Kentuckians for their opinions on a number of education-related issues. Most of the questions paralleled questions asked in earlier national surveys reflected in the annual Phi Delta Kappa/Gallup Poll. Together, the surveys allow for a comparison of the attitudes of Kentuckians toward their local education system and those of residents of the nation generally toward their local education systems.

The Phi Delta Kappa/Kentucky Poll shows that public school parents in Kentucky have a higher degree of understanding of, and confidence in, their local public schools than parents in the nation as a whole have in theirs.

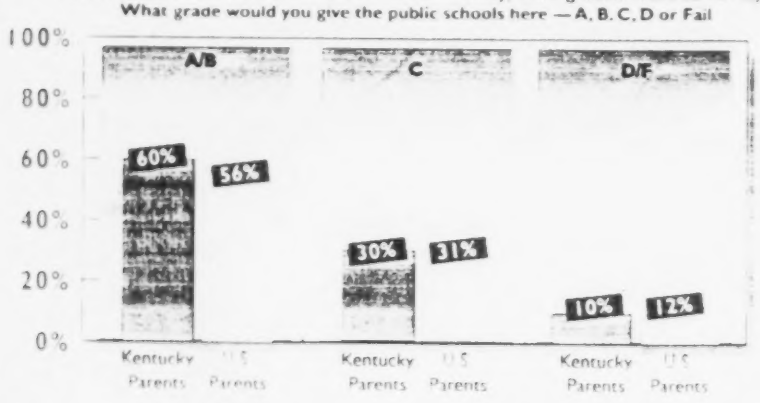
Like many of the other survey results interspersed under the "Reality Check" logo throughout this report, the following questions show the degree to which Kentucky public school parents have confidence in their public schools.



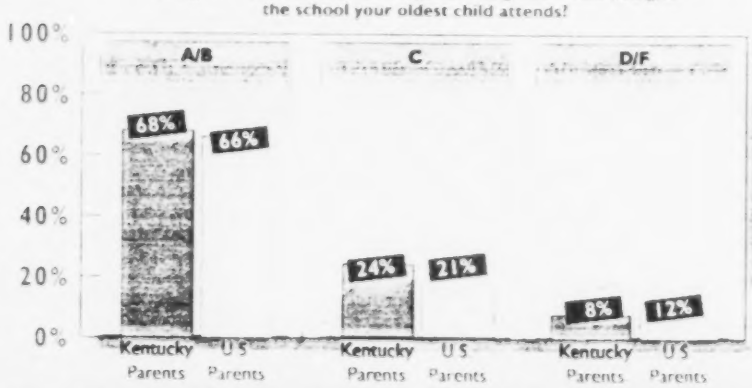
Would you say you were well informed, fairly well informed, or not well informed about the local public school situation?



Students are often given the grades A, B, C, D and Fail to denote the quality of their work. Suppose public schools themselves, in this community, were graded in the same way. What grade would you give the public schools here — A, B, C, D or Fail

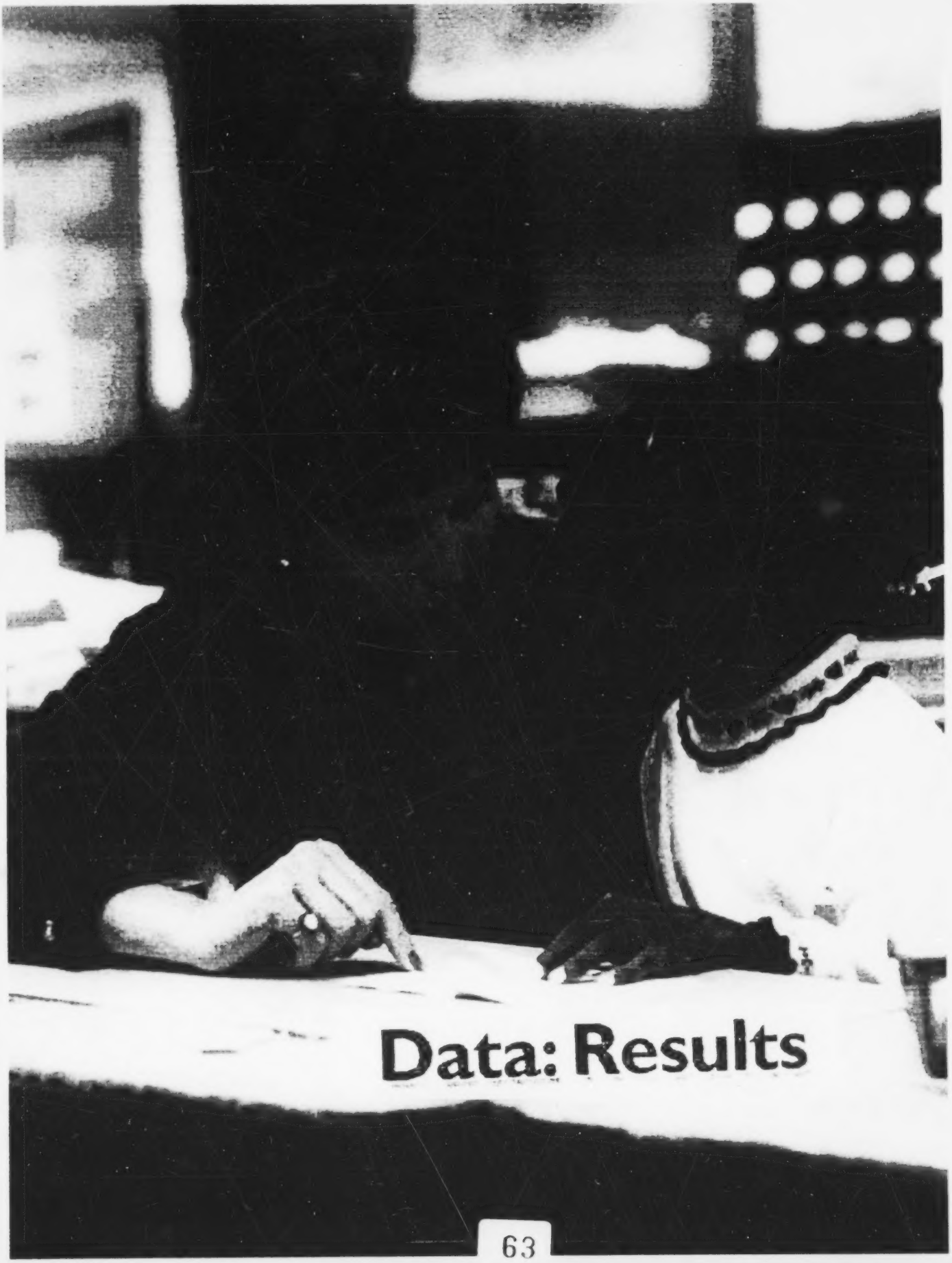


Using the A, B, C, D, Fail scale again, what grade would you give the school your oldest child attends?



Note: Some totals may not equal 100 due to rounding and/or no responses.

Sources: Kentucky parent sample: Phi Delta Kappa/Kentucky Poll, conducted January 2000. National parent sample: Phi Delta Kappa/Gallup Polls, Sept. 1998, Sept. 1999.



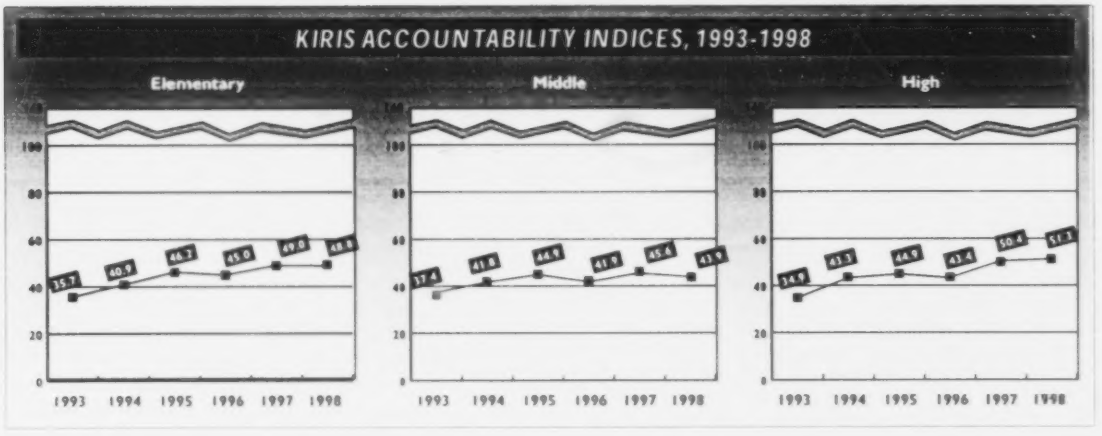
Data: Results

Kentucky Instructional Results Information System (KIRIS)

The Kentucky Instructional Results Information System (KIRIS) was the first assessment and accountability system dedicated to measuring student achievement under the Kentucky Education Reform Act. The first KIRIS assessment to collect baseline data was given in the spring of 1992.

From 1992 to 1998, KIRIS assessments were administered in reading, mathematics, science, social studies, writing, arts and humanities, and practical living/vocational studies. The format of the assessments included multiple-choice questions, open-response questions, writing portfolios, and writing tests. Although included in the first KIRIS assessments, Performance Events were dropped after 1993-94. Math portfolios for grades 8 and 12 were included in the 1994-96 scores.

The scores of each school in the various subjects were compiled into an accountability index for each school. Each school was then expected to exceed its improvement goal the next two years to receive financial rewards.

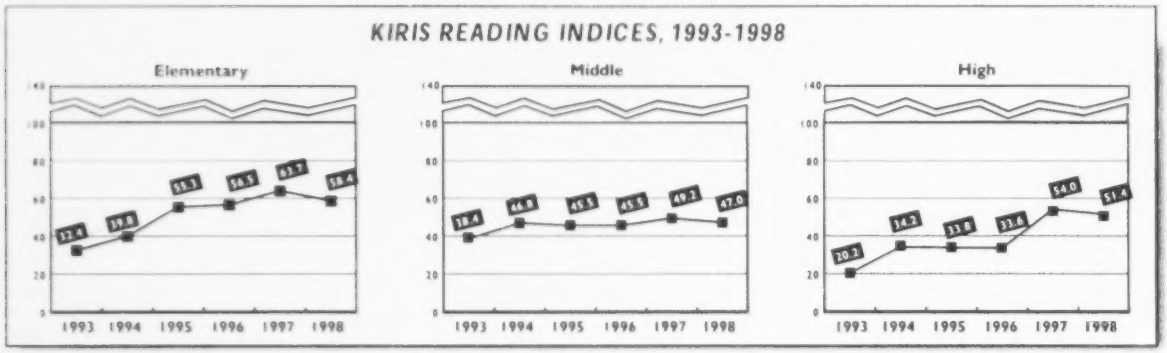


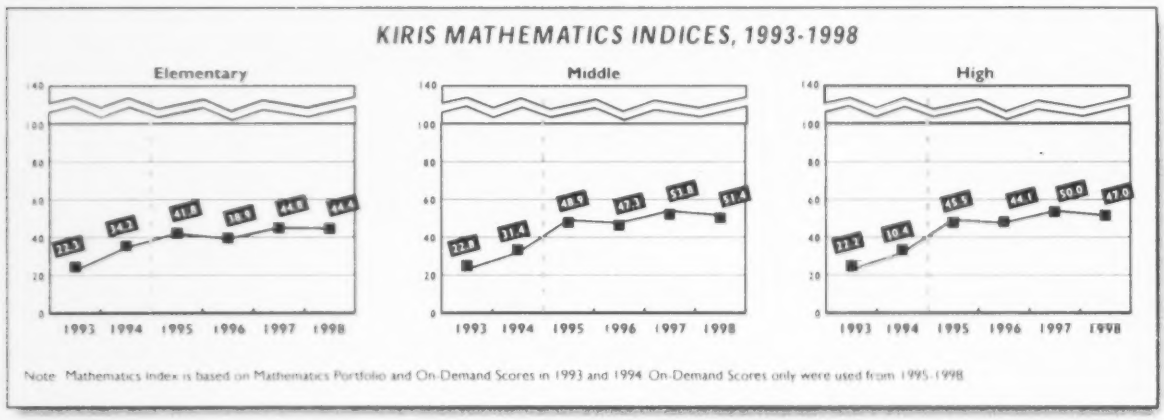
Kentucky Instructional Results Information System (KIRIS)

Academic Indices

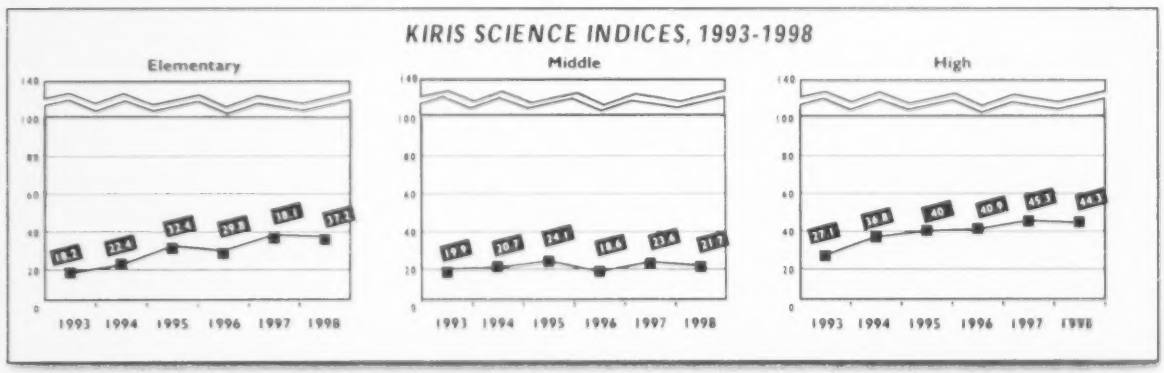
Each school's accountability index was derived by adding the academic index for each subject and the school's non-academic index. Reading, writing, mathematics, science and social studies each made up 14 percent of the accountability index. Arts and humanities and practical living/vocational studies each contributed 7 percent to the index. The non-academic indicators of attendance, dropout, retention and successful transition rates accounted for 16 percent of the accountability index.

School scores represented an average of the individual scores of the school's students, created by awarding credit as follows: novice-zero, apprentice-40 points, proficient-100 points and distinguished-140 points. The state goal was proficient.



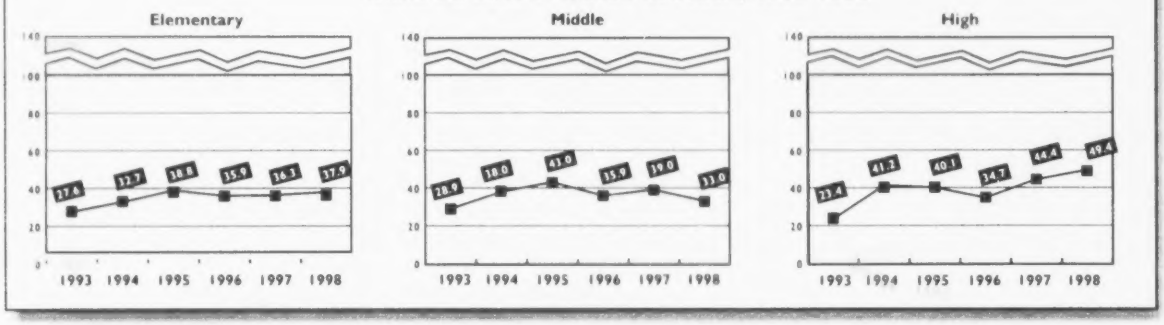


Note: Mathematics index is based on Mathematics Portfolio and On-Demand Scores in 1993 and 1994. On-Demand Scores only were used from 1995-1998.

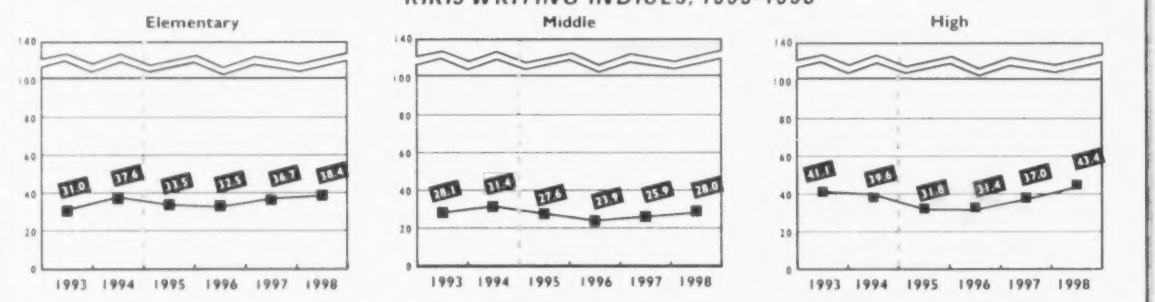


Note: Elementary school indices include results for grades 4 and 5. Middle school indices include results for grades 7 and 8. High school indices include results for grades 11 and 12.

KIRIS SOCIAL STUDIES INDICES, 1993-1998

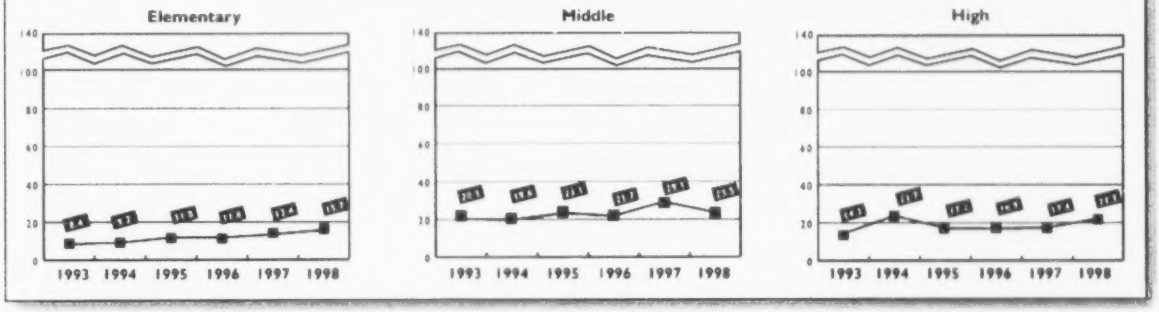


KIRIS WRITING INDICES, 1993-1998

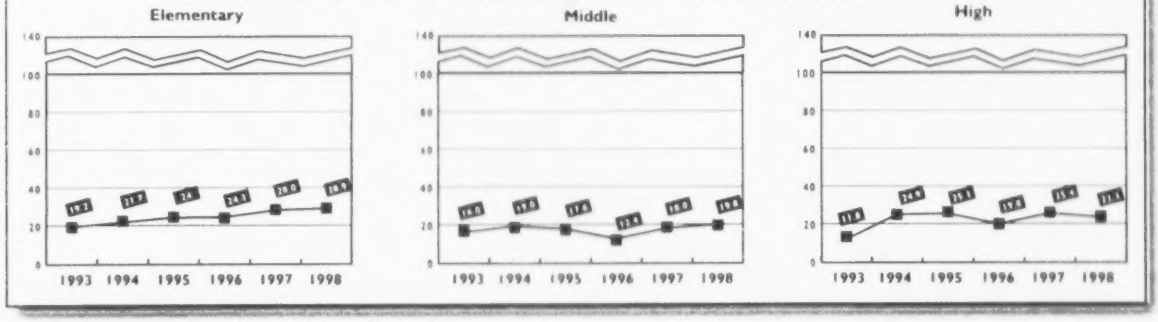


Note: Writing index is based upon Portfolio scores only for 1993 and 1994. In 1995-1998, the writing index is a combination of Portfolio and On-Demand scores from 1995-1998.

KIRIS ARTS & HUMANITIES INDICES, 1993-1998



KIRIS PRACTICAL LIVING/VOCATIONAL STUDIES INDICES, 1993-1998



Note: Elementary school indices include results for grades 4 and 5. Middle school indices include results for grades 7 and 8. High school indices include results for grades 11 and 12.

Commonwealth Accountability Testing System (CATS)

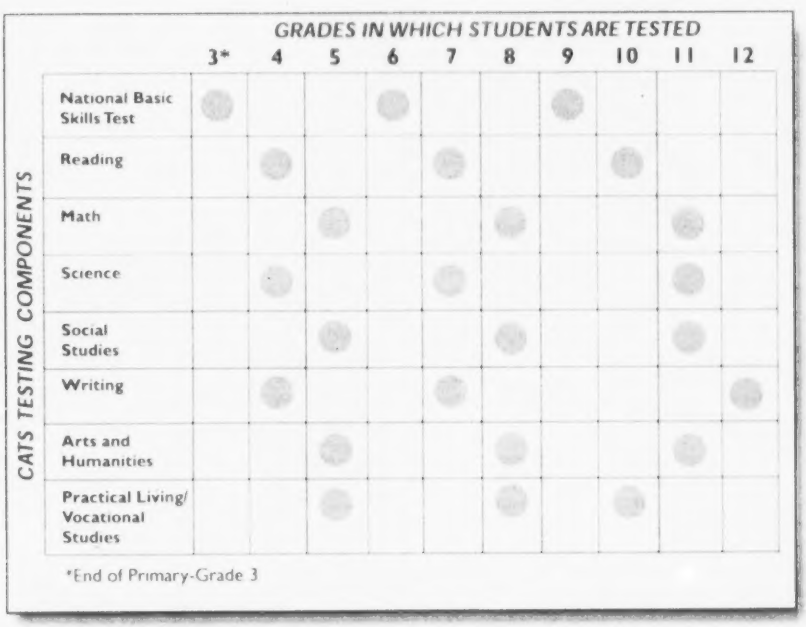
In 1998 the State Legislature enacted a law that directed the Kentucky Board of Education to redesign the state's assessment and accountability system. Through the involvement of thousands of educators and input from more than 6,500 Kentucky citizens, the Commonwealth Accountability Testing System (CATS) was born. Progress was monitored by four legislated advisory groups:

- The School Curriculum, Assessment and Accountability Advisory Council – Two superintendents, two principals, two teachers, two district assessment coordinators, two university professors, two business representatives, two local board members, two parents, and one member at large appointed by the governor.
- The National Technical Panel for Assessment and Accountability – Seven nationally renowned testing specialists who monitor all technical issues.
- The Office of Education Accountability – An office of the state legislature charged with oversight of the state's education system.
- The Education, Assessment and Accountability Review Subcommittee – A subcommittee of legislators monitoring implementation of the statute.

Assessments

Responding to concerns about the previous testing system, the CATS advisory groups instituted multiple measures of school progress, spread across more grade levels. CATS includes:

- CTBS/5 – Survey Edition (California Test of Basic Skills, 5th Edition) – A national basic skills test administered in reading, language arts and math.
- Kentucky Core Content Tests – Multiple choice and open response questions in reading, mathematics, science, social studies, arts and humanities and practical living/vocational studies. Students also complete writing portfolios and an on-demand writing task.
- Alternate Portfolios – The less than 2 percent of the student population with moderate to severe disabilities participate in this alternative assessment.



Commonwealth Accountability Testing System (CATS)

1999 Academic Indices

The categories of novice, apprentice, proficient and distinguished are still being used for the interim accountability model but schools receive incremental credit for progress within the novice and apprentice categories in reading, mathematics, science and social studies. An academic index is created for each subject by using the percent of students scoring in each category. These weights also apply to the long-term accountability model.

Schools get credit as follows:

What are Novice, Apprentice, Proficient and Distinguished Performance Levels?

Student progress is reported by identifying the performance level achieved. School and district success is measured by the percentage of students achieving at each performance level and by the number of students who move toward a higher level of performance. Points are assigned based on the level achieved. The levels for reading, mathematics, science and social studies are:

Non-Performance - 0 points
Medium Novice - 13 points
High Novice - 26 points
Low Apprentice - 40 points
Medium Apprentice - 60 points
High Apprentice - 80 points
Proficient - 100 points
Distinguished - 140 points

The points earned and levels for arts and humanities and practical living/vocational studies, plus the writing on-demand prompt and portfolio, and the alternate portfolio are:

Non-Performance - 0 points
Novice - 13 points
Apprentice - 60 points
Proficient - 100 points
Distinguished - 140 points

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Commonwealth Accountability Testing System (CATS)

Accountability

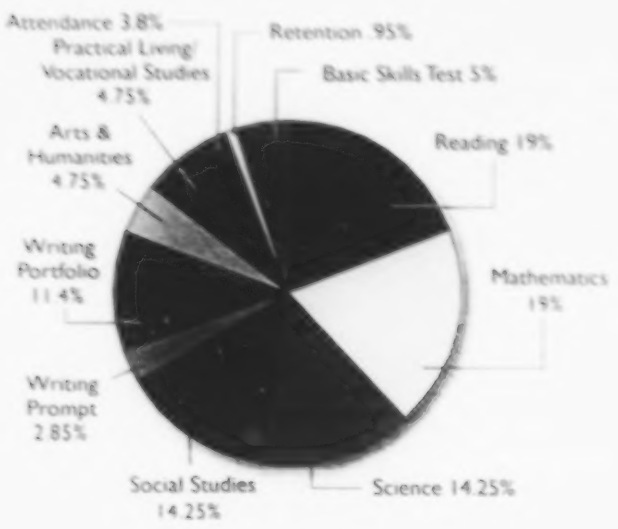
1997-2000

Because of the many differences between the discontinued KIRIS and the new Kentucky Core Content Tests that resulted from legislation in 1998, the accountability cycle ending in 2000 demanded a model that could bridge KIRIS to CATS. For this accountability cycle only, an interim accountability model is being used. It includes the results of the Kentucky Core Content Tests and the nonacademic indicators of attendance, dropout, retention and successful transition to adult life.

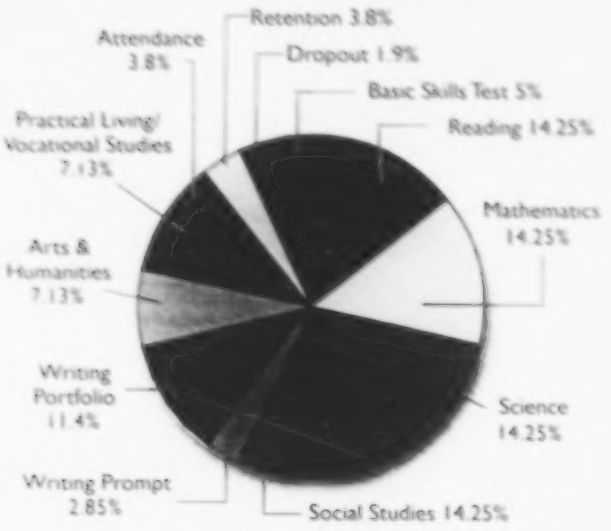
1999-2014

In 1999, the Kentucky Board of Education adopted the Long-Term Accountability Model. The goal for each school is to have the average of all of its students reach the proficient level by 2014. The weighting of the subjects in the formula were changed as a result of the redesign including awarding 5% of the formula to the national basic skills test.

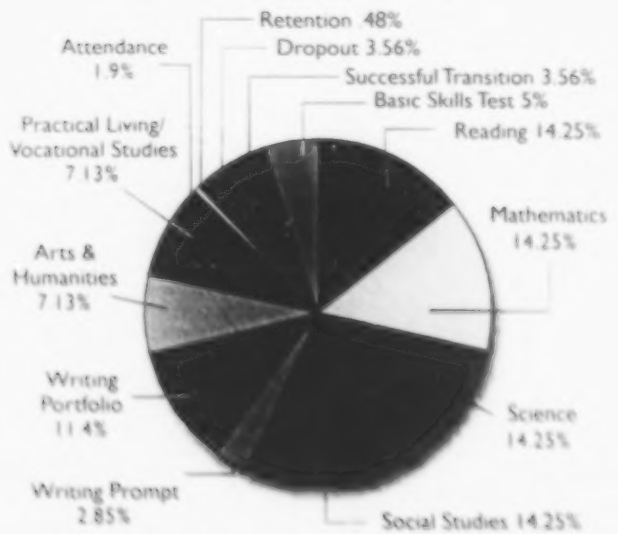
ELEMENTARY SCHOOL WEIGHTS



MIDDLE SCHOOL WEIGHTS



HIGH SCHOOL WEIGHTS



Percents do not total 100% due to rounding

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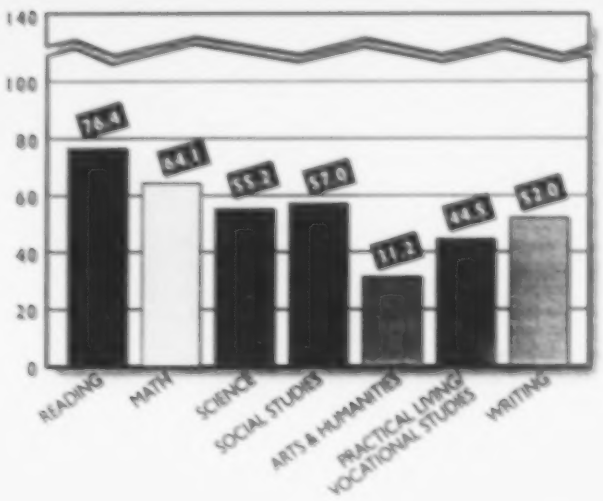
Commonwealth Accountability Testing System (CATS)

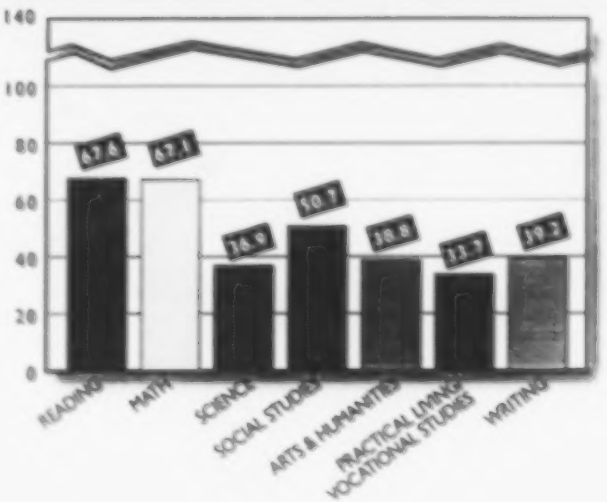
1999 Academic Indices

The accountability index is derived by adding these academic indices using the weights on the preceding page of this report and the nonacademic data for the interim accountability model. For the baseline of the long term model, CTBS/5 results will be added.

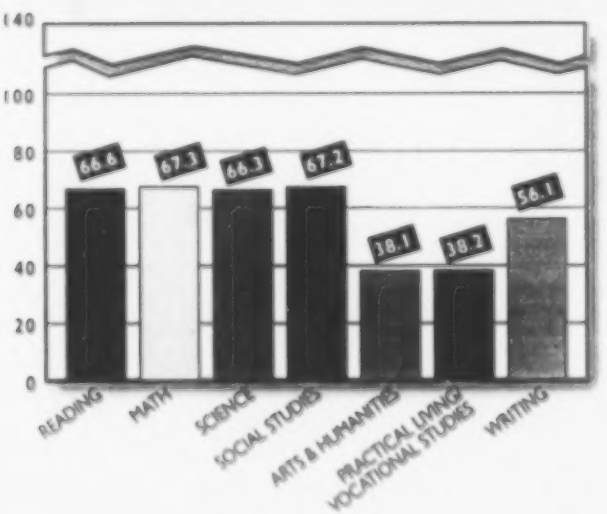
ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS



MIDDLE SCHOOLS



HIGH SCHOOLS



Commonwealth Accountability Testing System (CATS)

1999 Accountability Indices

The following results for the first round of Kentucky Core Content Tests, a component of CATS, will be averaged with the results from 2000. This plus the nonacademic data will form the growth index for the Interim Accountability. These scores will also be used in combination with CTBS/5 results and nonacademic data, averaged with spring 2000 results, to form the baseline for the Long-Term Accountability Model.

Region and State Accountability Indices Interim Accountability Cycle Midpoint (1996-1997 to 1998-99), by Grade Level

Elementary	Index 1996-97	Index 1997-98	Baseline Combined Index 1996-1998	Index 1998-99
Region 1	48.9	48.7	48.8	62.3
Region 2	50.6	51.2	50.9	63.9
Region 3	47.3	47.1	47.2	58.2
Region 4	50.9	51.5	51.2	63.9
Region 5	51.5	51.1	51.3	64.6
Region 6	47.4	46.1	46.8	58.2
Region 7	50.5	47.7	49.1	59.6
Region 8	44.2	43.6	43.9	56.0
Statewide	**49.1**	**48.8**	**49.0**	**61.3**

Middle	Index 1996-97	Index 1997-98	Baseline Combined Index 1996-1998	Index 1998-99
Region 1	46.5	45.6	46.1	55.6
Region 2	47.8	46.7	47.3	57.6
Region 3	40.9	39.6	40.3	49.5
Region 4	47.9	47.3	47.6	57.0
Region 5	48.7	46.0	47.3	56.3
Region 6	43.7	41.3	42.5	51.8
Region 7	45.7	43.0	44.3	53.9
Region 8	42.1	40.8	41.5	50.1
Statewide	**45.6**	**44.1**	**44.9**	**54.3**

High	Index 1996-97	Index 1997-98	Baseline Combined Index 1996-1998	Index 1998-99
Region 1	51.7	51.8	51.7	64.0
Region 2	51.9	54.0	52.9	65.6
Region 3	48.8	51.0	49.9	62.9
Region 4	53.3	53.8	53.5	67.0
Region 5	53.7	53.0	53.3	65.8
Region 6	46.8	47.7	47.2	60.2
Region 7	48.3	47.9	48.1	61.5
Region 8	45.4	47.2	46.3	58.1
Statewide	**50.4**	**51.3**	**50.8**	**63.6**

Note: Elementary is grades 4 and 5. Middle is grades 7 and 8 and High is grades 10, 11 and 12.
Comparisons cannot be made between results from KIRIS (1997 & 1998) and the KY Core Content Test (1999 & 2000) other than through the interim model described in 703 KAR 5:080.

CTBS/5 Survey Edition
(Comprehensive Test of Basic Skills)

For the first time the results of a national test, the Comprehensive Test of Basic Skills, will figure into the baseline average for long-term accountability. This same test was administered in 1997 and 1998 but was not used for accountability purposes.

The following results are reported in national percentiles, which reflect the percentage of students in the national norm group falling below the mean score for the school or district.

CTBS National Percentiles

Reading

Grade	1997	1998	1999
3*	49	50	51
6	53	53	52
9	52	51	51

Language Arts

Grade	1997	1998	1999
3*	48	49	50
6	50	50	50
9	49	48	47

Mathematics

Grade	1997	1998	1999
3*	49	48	51
6	49	49	49
9	44	45	46

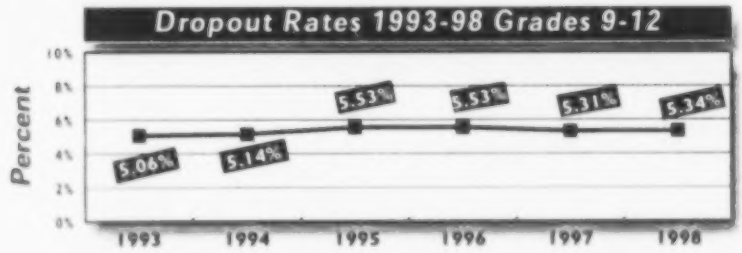
Combined Scores (Total Battery)

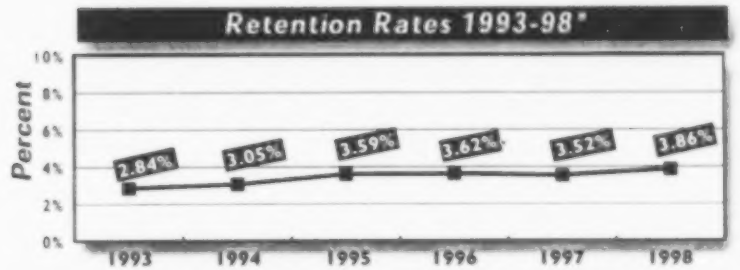
Grade	1997	1998	1999
3*	50	50	52
6	53	50	50
9	48	48	48

*Grade 3 = End of Primary

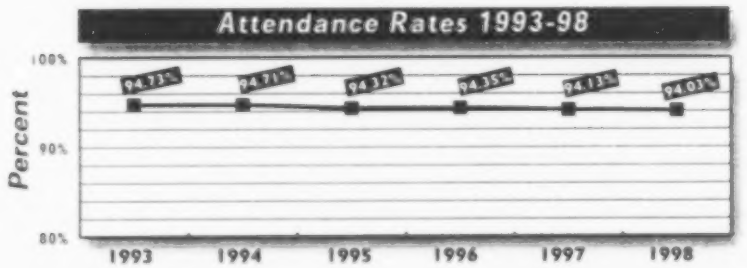
Non-Academic Data

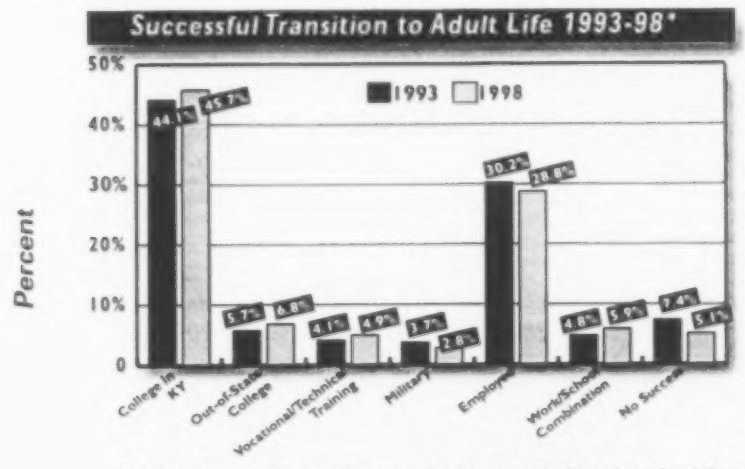
The Kentucky Board of Education has for some time focused on attendance, dropout, retention and successful transition to adult life as indicators of a school's success. The board emphasized its commitment to keeping students in school by requiring a condition in the long-term accountability model that schools meet a specific dropout reduction rate to be eligible for rewards. In the year 2000, schools with dropout rates exceeding 8 percent will not be eligible for rewards. In 2002, schools must have dropout rates of 5.3 percent or lower, or they must have reduced their own dropout rates .5 percent and be at or below a 6 percent dropout rate.





*This indicator measures the percent of students who are not prepared to be promoted to the next grade in the next year. These students are retained in the same grade for an additional year.





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*This indicator measures the successful transition of students six months after graduation from high school. A student is considered successful if they go to college, post-secondary school, join the military or become gainfully employed. These two charts reflect the change occurring between 1993 and 1998.

Other Measures of Student Achievement

NAEP (National Assessment of Educational Progress)

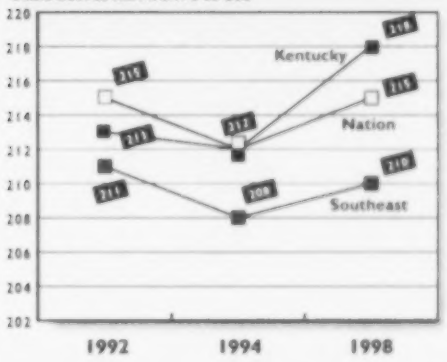
Kentucky got good news in 1999 when the state was named one of the three states with the most significant gains in 4th grade reading on the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP). The results on this national test, often called the nation's report card, are the first national evidence that show reform efforts are working in Kentucky.

In 1992, when reform had just been initiated, Kentucky's 4th grade NAEP reading scores were below the national average. Two years later, they were at the national average and six years later they are above the national average.

These data compare Kentucky to the southeast region of the nation and the nation as a whole.

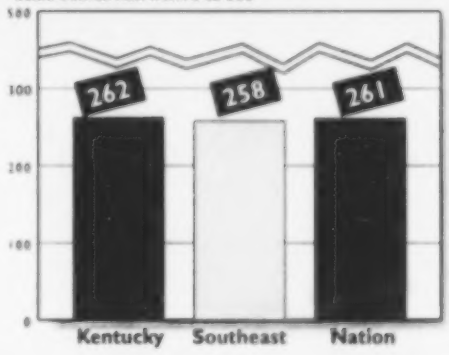
NAEP — 4th Grade Reading

Scale Scores Run from 0 to 500



NAEP — 8th Grade Reading 1998

Scale Scores Run from 0 to 500

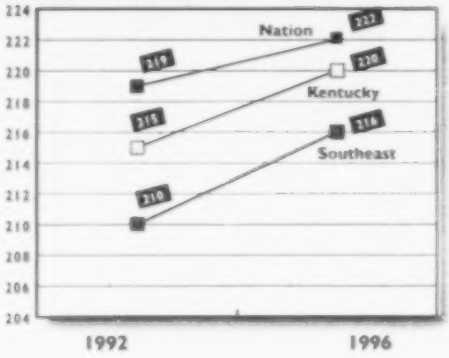


1998 was the first year the NAEP reading assessment was available for 8th grade. Kentucky is 4 points above the southeast and 1 point above the national average.

Kentucky is closing the gap between the performance of its students and the national average. In 1992 there was a 4 point gap which, thanks to a 5-point gain in Kentucky and a 3-point gain nationally, closed to 2 points in 1996.

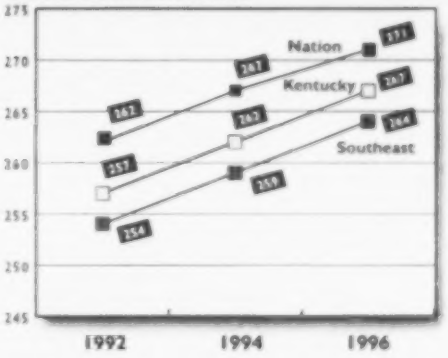
NAEP — 4th Grade Mathematics

Scale Scores Run from 0 to 500



NAEP — 8th Grade Mathematics

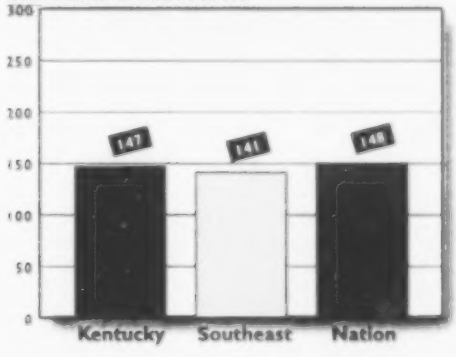
Scale Scores Run from 0 to 500



Kentucky's 8th grade performance in Mathematics is improving. The gap between Kentucky and the nation closed by 1 point between 1990 and 1996.

NAEP — 8th Grade Science 1998

Scale Scores Run from 0 to 300



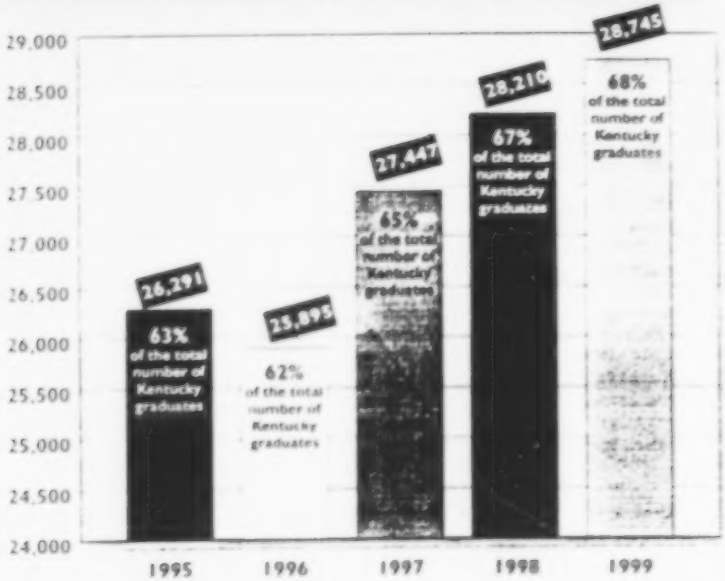
These data show that Kentucky is 6 points above the Southeast and only 1 point below the national average.

Other Measures of Student Achievement

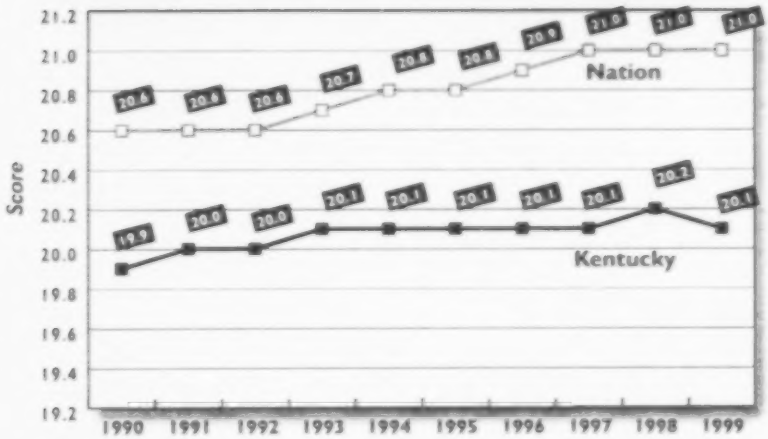
ACT

This national test is taken by college-bound high school students and used by the colleges as one predictor of student success in college. More students in Kentucky are taking this test, and both the nation's and Kentucky's scores are relatively flat.

Number of Students Taking the ACT in Kentucky



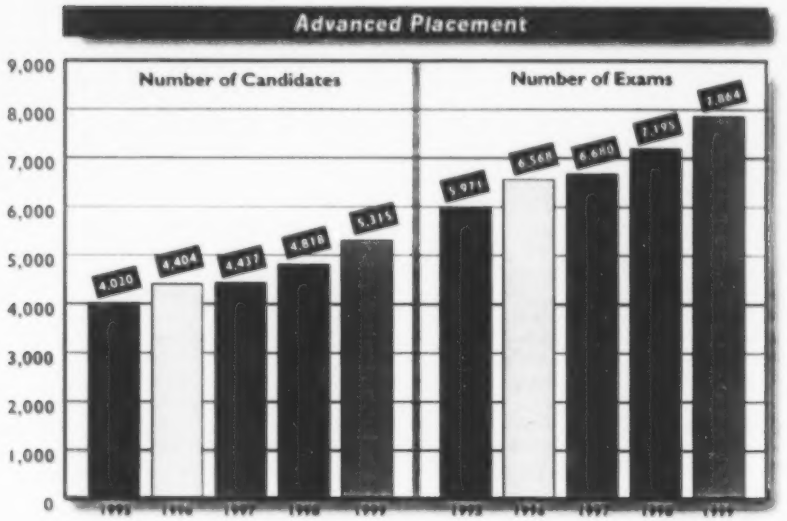
ACT — 1990-1999

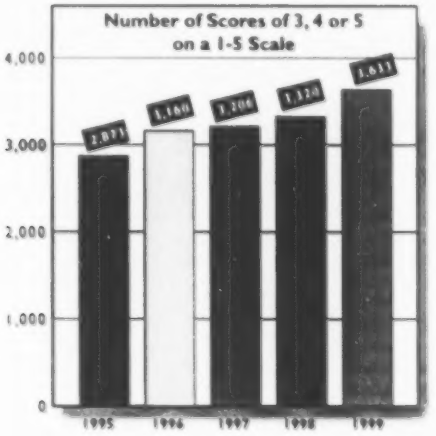


Other Measures of Student Achievement

Advanced Placement Tests

By taking Advanced Placement courses and receiving a score of 4 or 5 on a 5 point scale on the corresponding Advanced Placement test, high school students may be eligible to forego taking some entry level college classes. The number of Kentucky students taking AP courses, the corresponding AP exams and getting better scores are all increasing.





All Students Can Learn

The simple underlying principle of Kentucky's education system is that all students can learn, and most at high levels. Many of our schools are proving that! Even schools with a high concentration of students who qualify for the federal free and reduced-price lunch program are addressing all students' learning needs and showing large gains in many measures.

These schools have

- High Poverty — 50% or more of the students qualifying for free and reduced-price lunches
- Big Gains — 10 or more points gain on the Comprehensive Test of Basic Skills (CTBS) from 1997 to 1999 in the elementary and middle schools and 5 or more points gain in the high schools

ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS

DISTRICT	SCHOOL	POVERTY LEVEL	CTBS-1997	CTBS-1999	GAIN 1997-1999
BELL CO	Blackmont Elementary	75.79	35.10	57.50	22.4
KNOX CO	Dewitt Elementary	94.79	22	44.1	22.3
MONTGOMERY CO	Mount Sterling Elementary	64.90	40.3	62.2	21.9
BOURBON CO	Millersburg Elementary	56.45	40.2	61.6	21.4
PERRY CO	Dennis C. Wooton Elementary	68.43	42.8	63.2	20.4
FLOYD CO	James A. Duff Elementary	80.43	36.7	55.5	18.8
BREATHITT CO	Rousseau Elementary	77.60	40.0	56.9	16.9
LEE CO	South Side Elementary	80.34	40.9	57.7	16.8
HARDIN CO	Upton Elementary	57.02	38.5	55.1	16.6
PADUCAH IND	Morgan Elementary	98.92	38	53.5	15.5
WHITLEY CO	Pleasant View Elementary	94.01	43.1	58.2	15.1
MCLEAN CO	Livermore Elementary	57.23	41.4	56.3	14.9
CLAY CO	Laurel Creek Elementary	90.16	37.4	51.9	14.5
PERRY CO	Willard Elementary	89.01	36.7	50.6	13.9
HART CO	Cub Run Elementary	65.75	49.3	62.6	13.3
HARLAN IND	Harlan Elementary	64.46	42.3	55.4	13.1
LESLIE CO	Hayes Lewis Elementary	69.76	40.7	53.5	12.8
LETCHER CO	Fleming Neon Elementary	63.33	42.6	55.4	12.8
LEWIS CO	Lewis County Central Elementary	74.84	32.8	45.3	12.5
PADUCAH IND	McNabb Elementary	78.79	41.8	54.2	12.4
ROWAN CO	Rodburn Elementary	70.11	43.2	55.4	12.2
JEFFERSON CO	Gilmore Lane Elementary	73.96	32.1	44.1	12.0
RUSSELL CO	Union Chapel Elementary	74.74	48.0	59.5	11.5
POWELL CO	Bowen Elementary	70.11	49.9	61.1	11.2
HOPKINS CO	Pride Avenue Elementary	54.44	44.9	56.1	11.2
CAVERNA IND	Caverna Elementary	54.0	46.9	58.1	11.2
CLAY CO	Hacker Elementary	76.89	38.0	49.0	11.0
MASON CO	Charles Straub Elementary	54.89	47.4	58.1	10.9
PERRY CO	Leatherwood Elementary	81.14	41.2	51.9	10.7
WHITLEY CO	Poplar Creek Elementary	94.64	38.8	49.4	10.6
LAUREL CO	Johnson Elementary	70.59	44.3	54.8	10.5
MADISON CO	Kirksville Elementary	60.81	45.6	56.1	10.5
HARLAN CO	Wallins Elementary	81.04	48.3	58.5	10.2
OHIO CO	Wayland Alexander Elementary	59.59	50.4	60.6	10.2
WOLFE CO	Red River Valley Elementary	85.28	39.7	49.7	10.0

MIDDLE SCHOOLS

DISTRICT	SCHOOL	POVERTY LEVEL	CTBS-1997	CTBS-1999	GAIN 1997-1999
LEWIS CO	Laurel Elementary	64.76	44.30	58.70	14.40
PIKE CO	Lookout Elementary	87.61	39.40	53.30	13.90
BREATHITT CO	Highland-Turner Elementary	90.97	35.20	47.60	12.40
ADAIR CO	Sparksville Elementary	67.82	40.90	52.50	11.60
PERRY CO	Big Creek Elementary	61.59	35.20	46.60	11.40
HARLAN CO	Green Hills Elementary	89.08	38.70	50.00	11.30
BRECKINRIDGE CO	Custer Elementary	66.27	45.90	57.00	11.10
EMINENCE IND	Eminence Middle School	50.00	42.50	53.40	10.90
PERRY CO	Willard Elementary	89.01	34.80	44.80	10.50
KNOX CO	Artemus Elementary	94.42	37.00	47.30	10.30
CLAY CO	Hacker Elementary	76.89	38.30	48.50	10.20

HIGH SCHOOLS

DISTRICT	SCHOOL	POVERTY LEVEL	CTBS-1997	CTBS-1999	GAIN 1997-1999
PINEVILLE IND	Pineville High School	65.99	40.80	47.50	6.70
CUMBERLAND CO	Cumberland County High School	60.11	43.40	49.80	6.40
WOLFE CO	Wolfe County High School	65.12	40.30	45.40	5.10

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All Students Can Learn

Sixteen high poverty high schools with dropout rates below the state average further reduced their dropout rates

High Schools

High School	% Free or Reduced-Price Lunch	1997-1998 Dropout Rate
Feds Creek High School (Pike Co.)	70%	1.74
Elkhorn City High School (Pike Co.)	59%	2.36
Bell Co. High School	53%	3.20
Clinton Co. High School	69%	4.23
Dayton Independent High School	52%	4.72
West Carter Co. High School (Harlan Co.)	56%	5.03
Leslie Co. High School	63%	2.44
Fleming-Neon High School (Letcher Co.)	63%	3.67
Johnson Central High School (Johnson Co.)	64%	2.44
Wayne Co. High School	62%	4.16
Buckhorn High School (Perry Co.)	68%	4.78
Louisville Central High School (Jefferson Co.)	56%	2.68
Letcher Co. High School	64%	1.71
Pineville Ind. High School	66%	3.72
Monticello Ind. High School	58%	2.35
Paducah-Tilghman High School (Paducah Ind.)	68%	3.67

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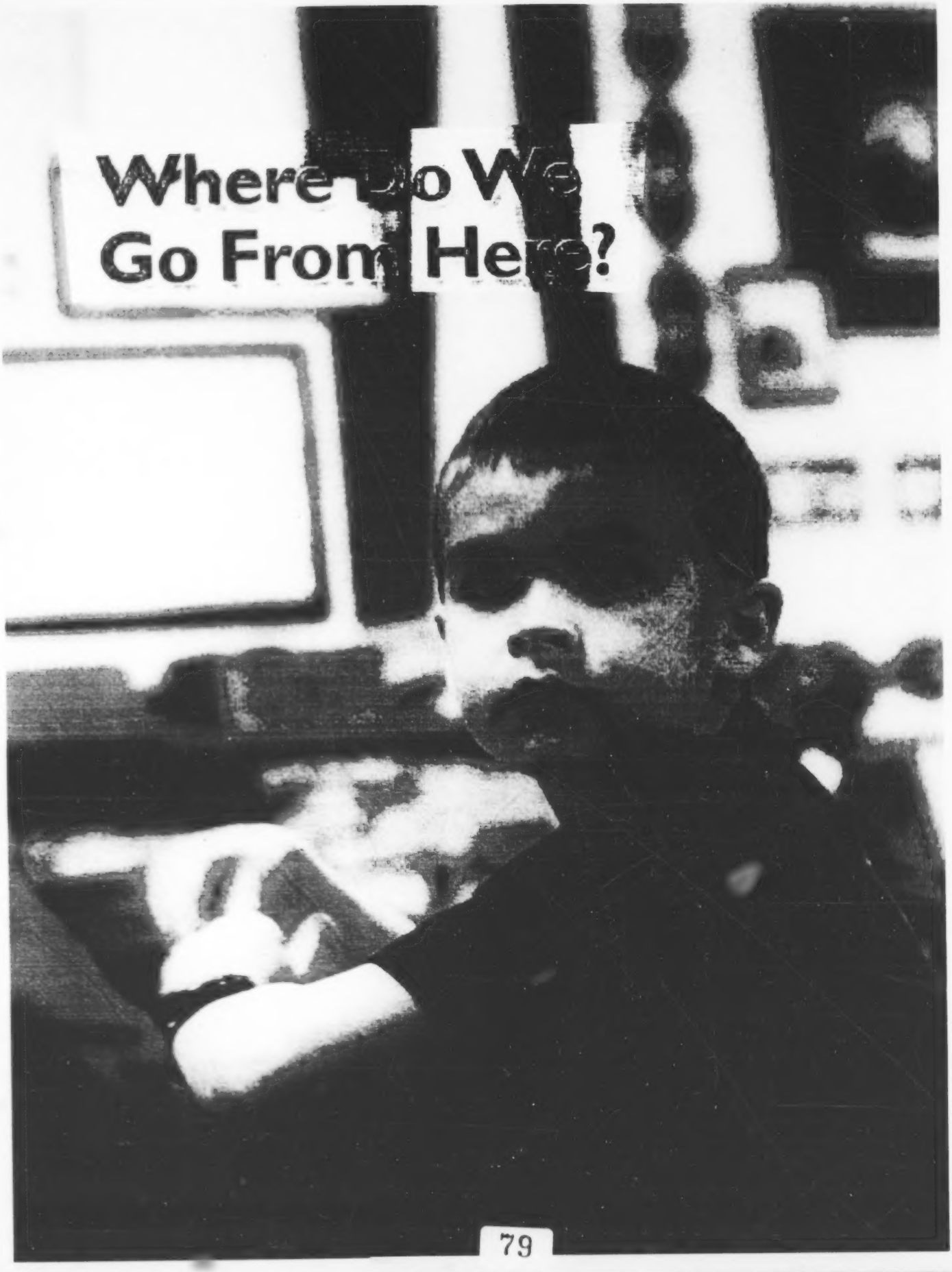
Where Do We
Go From Here?

"Our goal is achievable now"

"I have seen things in the past 10 years that I did not dream possible. Education reform has addressed the equity issue and has empowered schools and school districts to make decisions regarding their own needs.

"Money is now available, and that puts schools on a more even playing field.

"Before reform, there was no coherence in the curriculum and no orientation to overall achievement of school goals. Schools now have the authority, through School-Based Decision Making councils, to determine policies and issues that directly affect the unique needs of their students. Facilities can be updated and built to provide the best learning environment for our children. There is more flexibility in curriculum materials. Instructional strategies and methods focus on the individual school's weaknesses and capitalize on school strengths. Decisions are research- and needs-based.

"I think our goal is achievable now. We feel our students can be competitive, and test scores indicate that is true. We have direction and the resources to make our goal attainable. I know where we were before reform — and it wasn't working. I am proud that we have stayed the course. We are going to succeed."

Roger Wagner began teaching math at Johns Creek High School in 1970, and became the school's assistant principal in 1982. He has served as the principal of Johns Creek Elementary for the past eight years.

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Where do we go from here?

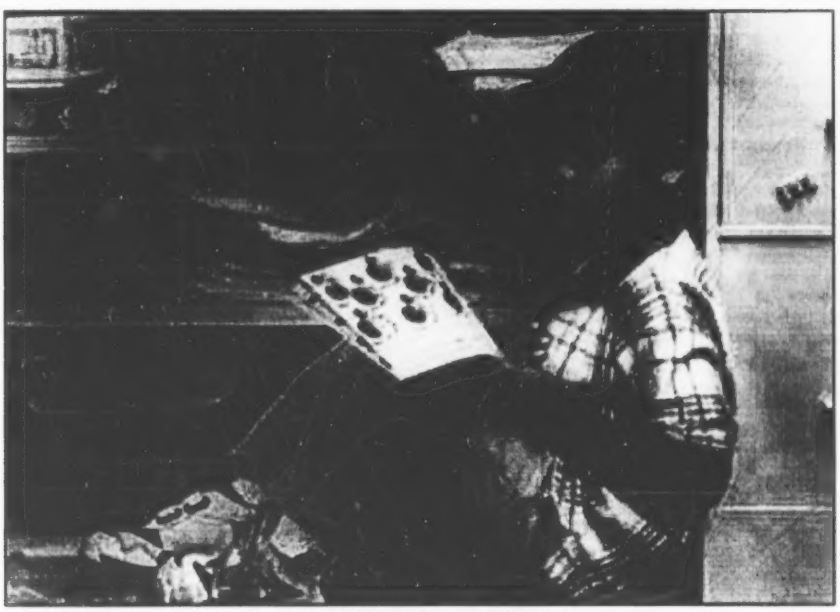
After 10 years of implementation and refinement, Kentucky's 1990 school reform program is firmly established. More equitable funding, accountability for results, high standards, continuous improvement, decentralized decision making, extra help for at-risk students (all new in 1990) are now the routine and accepted ways of operating schools in Kentucky today.

Kentucky students are also performing better academically. Substantial gains have been made in key subject areas — reading and mathematics, in particular — on the comprehensive tests that are designed to measure performance against Kentucky's standards. Kentucky's students have also begun to show gains on national tests that are designed to measure skills and content similar to Kentucky's. Every demographic subgroup of Kentucky students has also improved academically.

Schools, too, are getting better. Statewide, the overall performance of schools has improved steadily since 1992, the first year of testing. In fact, a few schools have already reached the long-term performance goal of 100 on the academic index in one or two subjects. The gains are reflected in all types of schools (elementary, middle and high, urban, suburban and rural) in every region of the state. In the most successful schools, principals exhibit strong instructional leadership and teachers have high academic expectations for all students. Teachers routinely work together in these schools to determine school goals, analyze weaknesses, set strategies, and divide responsibilities for teaching key content.

Curriculum and teaching have become more focused on both core content and individual students. Using state descriptions of what students should know and be able to do, most schools have evaluated what they are teaching and have made changes to ensure that students have the opportunity to learn it. More schools have also begun to use their professional development resources to help teachers deepen their subject matter understanding and learn new ways of teaching, particularly ways that will reach all students.

While the overall progress is impressive, a closer look at performance results reveals much work to be done. While the percentage of students performing at the lowest levels has declined dramatically, relatively few students have reached the top levels. While reading scores have



Tony Chak, Rich Pond Elementary, Warren County Schools

Latisha Hodgens, Susan Kirkpatrick, Eric Sanders, Stanford Elementary School, Lincoln County Schools

soared, progress in other subject areas has not been as great. Middle school performance lags behind that of elementary and high schools. Some regions of the state have made significantly less progress than others. African-American students lag behind their Caucasian counterparts. While some schools have made continuous and dramatic improvements, others have been unable to sustain modest gains. While teacher education programs and professional development have improved, many teachers — both new and experienced — feel poorly prepared in some aspects to meet the rigorous challenges of our system of public education.

With reform well entrenched, the Kentucky Board of Education and other groups have focused their attention on the future. The central question is: What policy areas and issues do we need to address now and in the next few years to ensure that all Kentucky schools reach the goal of proficiency by 2014?

A few items consistently arise:

- What is the most effective assistance we can provide to schools that are low-performing or whose improvement consistently fails to meet goals?
- How can we reduce the state's dropout rate, which ranks about in the middle nationally, according to the National Center for Education Statistics, but has not gotten significantly better since 1990?
- What are the best ways to attract sufficient numbers of the best students to teaching, prepare them thoroughly and retain them in the profession?
- How do we ensure that experienced teachers continue to improve their content knowledge and teaching skills to meet continuously higher levels of expectations?
- How do we close the performance gap between minority and Caucasian children and ensure that children in all regions of the state have equal opportunities to learn?
- How do we go about taking advantage of the high capacity for learning by children in the earliest years of their lives?

These are the long-term challenges facing Kentucky educators, citizens and leaders in the 21st century. Over the past decade, Kentucky schools have hurdled many of the historical barriers to educational progress. Bold leadership, hard work and perseverance have moved many Kentucky schools forward. All children learning at high levels is a journey, not an event — the job will never be done. But, the Commonwealth moves forward with the confidence that all schools have the capacity for continuous improvement and academic excellence.